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JONAH: HIS LIFE AND MISSION.

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JONAH:

HIS LIFE AND MISSION

BY

REV. THOMAS KIRK,

SENIOR MINISTER OF HAYMARKET UNITED FREE CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF SAMSON," "SAUL, THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL," AND THE "LIFE OF JOSEPH."

"Behold, a Greater than Jonah is here!"—Matt. xii. 41.

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TO

THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON, JUNIOR MINISTER,

THE OFFICE-BEARERS AND THE MEMBERS OF THE
HAYMARKET U.F. CHURCH,

THIS VOLUME

IS CORDIALLY DEDICATED

BY

THE SENIOR MINISTER

AS A SMALL TOKEN OF HIS LOVING INTEREST AND REGARD.

026390

PREFACE

THIS monograph on Jonah is similar in its aims to those of the author's previous monographs on "Samson," "Saul," and "Joseph." It seeks to remove obscurities or misapprehensions from the character and history of the prophet, and to illuminate and freshen the sacred narrative with the most recent information. Many interesting and valuable works on the life of Jonah exist; but as our knowledge of eastern lands grows, and new forms of scepticism have sprung up, there seems to be a clamant need for a life of the prophet adapted to the new conditions.

There are four points on which more or less stress is laid in this monograph, to which the reader's attention is specially directed. (1.) *The time of Jonah's mission to Nineveh.* The author

places it about 764 B.C., the twentieth year of the reign of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, when Assurdan III. was king of Assyria. (2.) *The historic truth of the book of Jonah, as opposed to the opinion that it is a parable or fiction resting on an ancient legend.* Besides what is said on this subject in the monograph itself, especially in its conclusion, there is in the Appendix an article on the parabolic view of Professor George Smith, in which the baselessness of that theory and the historic truth of the book of Jonah are sought to be maintained. (3.) *The rich harmonies and suggestiveness of the history.* Instead of the parabolic view being a gain to the poetry of truth, it would be, as is shown, a great and irreparable loss. It not only fails to explain the position of the book of Jonah in the Hebrew canon, and our Lord's references to it in His discourses, but reduces the grand poetry of God in the history of the prophet to the low level of a vain imagination of the human heart. And (4) *The authorship and date of the book.* This subject is mainly discussed in the Appendix.

The life of Jonah is a theme of unfailing interest and wonder, and a rich mine of Divine truth. In

endeavouring to portray it the author would fain hope that he has succeeded in so presenting it as to ensure conviction in its historic truth, and clearer views of Him of whom Jonah was but the shadow. He also takes this opportunity of cordially acknowledging his indebtedness to the Rev. Mr Nisbet, Secretary of the National Bible Society, for his painstaking care and valuable suggestions in connection with the issuing of this volume.

EDINBURGH, *March* 1903.

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JONAH: HIS LIFE AND MISSION.

CHAPTER I.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF JONAH.

"'Tis granted, and no plainer truth appears,
Our most important are our earliest years;
The Mind, impressible and soft, with ease
Imbibes and copies what she hears and sees,
And through life's labyrinth holds fast the clue
That Education gives her, false or true."—*Cowper*.

THE Prophet Jonah, one of the most remarkable and best abused of prophets and men, was born at Gath-hepher among the Galilean hills, probably in the beginning of the reign of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, about the year 814 B.C. His birthplace is mentioned among the cities of the tribe of Zebulon in the days of Joshua (Josh. xix. 13). The modern name of the village, near the site of the ancient Gath-hepher, is El-Meshad; and on the little hill where the present village is built, there stands the tomb of Jonah, a spot which has been pointed out as the last resting-place of the prophet as far back as the days of Jerome. "The region around is

rocky but fertile, and clusters of fig and old olive trees are abundant." A few miles to the south-east lies the graceful and imposing Mount Tabor; about a mile to the north-east, Cana, the scene of our Lord's first miracle; and about three miles to the south-west, Nazareth, where Jesus lived from His childhood till He was about thirty years of age. As a boy the Son of Mary must often have visited the birthplace of Jonah and mused on his marvellous career.

The name of Jonah's father was Amittai, which means the True or Faithful one—a fit name for the father of such a son. He was doubtless a genuine worshipper of Jehovah, a man like Obadiah, the steward in the house of Ahab, of whom we read, that "he feared the Lord greatly" (1 Kings xviii. 3). The mention of his name seems to suggest that he was an outstanding man in his day, but like many good men who have faithfully served their day and generation, nothing is known of him beyond the name. His public career has been lost to view, like the wave which appears for a moment on the never-resting sea and then vanishes away.

The time when Jonah was born was one of peculiar gloom. The land of Israel was, and had been for many years before in the reign of Jehu,

cruelly ravaged and oppressed by Hazael, the king of Syria. Elisha, about thirty years before, had with grief beheld in prophetic vision his country's desolations. He was then on a visit at Damascus, the Syrian capital. As Ben-hadad the king was sick, Hazael, the trusted courtier and perhaps commander-in-chief, was sent with a princely present to the prophet, to consult him as to the issue of the sickness. After delivering the stirring message, "Go, say unto him, Thou shalt surely recover; howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die," Elisha fixed his piercing eye on the countenance of Hazael, to the confusion of the courtier, and shed tears as he gazed into the dim and not remote future. When the Syrian noble asked in surprise, "Why weepeth my lord?" the man of God to his still greater amazement replied: "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their women with child" (2 Kings viii. 7-12). This prediction, which was made towards the close of the reign of Jehoram, king of Israel, began to be fulfilled in the reign of his successor, Jehu. This valiant and energetic though vainglorious warrior, who executed the Divine

judgments on the house of Ahab, and who was rewarded for it by the announcement that his sons would sit upon the throne of Israel to the fourth generation, took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord with all his heart, but followed the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. And as the result of this the land suffered much at the hands of the Syrians. The sacred historian says: "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short, and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan" (2 Kings x. 32, 33). Still more severely were the evils of oppression felt in the reign of his son Jehoahaz, who, while not a whit better from a religious point of view, seems to have lacked the manly vigour and valour of his father. Things went from bad to worse. The utter prostration of the country is seen in the fact that the whole army, which Hazael left to the king of Israel, consisted of 50 horsemen, 10 chariots, and 10,000 footmen (2 Kings xiii. 7).

It was in this time of religious declension and national distress that the son of Amittai was born. There was joy indeed in that remote and humble dwelling among the beautiful highlands of Galilee

that a man-child was born into the world; but the joy was mingled with mourning for the sins and desolation of the land. It was probably because Amittai mourned like a dove that he gave his infant son the beautiful and suggestive name of Jonah (Dove). It was a memorial of the hour for the father, and it became for the son an emblem of his future character and career. In the coming time Jonah mourned like a dove over the sins and sorrows of his country, and over his own mistakes as well, and the troubles into which they led him.

There were doubtless many faithful ones like Amittai in that dark and disastrous period. Their number might not be so great as in the days of Elijah, when the Lord said to his desponding and despairing prophet, who thought of himself as the only one left, "Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings xix. 18); but in all likelihood, as in the days of Malachi, "they that feared the Lord spake one unto another" (Mal. iii. 16). Sometimes at Gath-hepher, in the house of Amittai there might meet a small gathering of the faithful, who talked amongst other things of the wonderful doings of Elijah and of his great successor, Elisha. And their conversation, not to speak of the instruction

and the influence of the home, could not fail to interest and mould the sensitive and thoughtful boy. Perhaps the education given by the parents was supplemented by the village school, if such existed in that sequestered district during this rude and distracted period.

As Elisha was alive in Samaria when Jonah was a lad of about sixteen years of age, it is extremely probable that the two met, the venerable prophet who had exercised his ministry for the long period of about sixty years, and the youth who was to be his first conspicuous successor. The faithful Amittai, who had dedicated his son to the sacred office, would naturally wish that his boy should be inspired by the sight of the noble veteran and receive the blessing of his uplifted hand; and the young lad himself would naturally wish to be personally acquainted with one whose history was so romantic and whose fame filled the land. But, be this as it may, there can be no doubt that the grand and attractive personality of Elisha had a powerful influence over the mind and heart of the young son of Amittai.

It was probably in Jonah's sixteenth year, and the second last year of the reign of Jehoahaz, that Israel was oppressed with unusual severity, as about that year Jehoahaz is mentioned as praying

unto the Lord for deliverance (2 Kings xiii. 4). This is the only wise and good thing recorded of this wicked monarch; and we may safely conclude that the oppression which led to it must have been peculiarly galling. His prayer, as the sacred historian informs us, was answered. He says: "The Lord hearkened unto him, and the Lord gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as beforetime" (2 Kings xiii. 4, 5). The actual deliverance, however, did not take place during the lifetime of the king, as we are told that "Hazael, king of Syria, oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz" (2 Kings xiii. 22). Did the king therefore die in ignorance that the Lord had hearkened unto his cry? I believe that he did not. The last prediction of Elisha to his son Joash, which was in all probability given soon after the prayer, was an answer which would comfort and inspire the oppressed king with hope during the remainder of his days. The objection that Joash, when he received the prediction, is spoken of as king, and that therefore his father Jehoahaz must have been dead, is set aside by the fact that in the synchronisms of the kings of Israel and Judah, Joash acted as co-regent for three years before the death of his father. Joash *was*

king at the time supposed for the giving of the prediction (see "Synchronisms" at the close of the chapter). The last prediction of the great prophet, which must have told with immense power on the youthful Jonah, is very interesting in its circumstances and details. The news that Elisha was lying sick of a mortal malady led Joash, a young prince of much kindliness and ability, to visit the aged seer; and as he looked on the dying sage he wept over him, and exclaimed in the words of Elisha to the departing Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" (2 Kings ii. 12). Then the dying prophet told the tender-hearted prince to take a bow and arrows, and to shoot one through a window opened to the east; and when Joash had done so with his assistance, for Elisha's hands were laid on the king's hands, the inspired seer exclaimed: "The Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria, for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek till thou have consumed them." He then said to Joash, "Take the arrows and smite upon the ground;" but as Joash smote only thrice with the arrows and then stayed, the man of God was wroth with him and said: "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times: then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now

thou shalt smite Syria but thrice" (2 Kings xiii. 14-19). The wrath of the aged and dying prophet at the young king's lack of energy reveals the burning ardour of his patriotism; and such glowing zeal for his country's freedom on the part of one so great and venerable, when on the very brink of the grave, must have greatly intensified the patriotic feelings of the youthful Jonah.

The Assyrian king who reigned at this time was Ramman-Nirari III., whose mother or wife was the famous Semiramis of the Greeks. He began to reign when Jonah was about three years of age, and he reigned twenty-eight years (B.C. 811-783). The success of his warlike operations in the west is thus recorded by himself: "From the upper part of the Euphrates to the land of Khatti (North Syria), Amurri (Coele Syria) to its farther borders, Tyre, Sidon, the land of Omri (Israel), Udumu (Edom), and Palastu (Philistia), right up to the great western sea, I reduced to subjection and exacted tribute and imposts; I marched against 'the land of asses' (Damascus), and shut up Maria—a word which Professor Hommel suggests as either the name of a brother of Hazael or a title of honour—king of the land of asses in his chief town, Damascus. . . . His countless wealth and goods I seized in Damascus; his residence in

the midst of his royal palace" ("Assyria," in Dr. Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible).

Assyria, as we learn from the inscriptions on her monuments, had in former times inspired dread in the land of Israel, as Ahab, *e.g.*, is mentioned as one of a hostile league which her king had defeated, and Jehu is represented on a black obelisk as paying homage to the same sovereign, Shalmanezer II.; and the words of Ramman-Nirari III., already quoted, show us that Assyria must also have been an object of dread to Israel in the days of Jonah. The dark and baleful shadow of that great world power must have rested on the bright spirit of the sensitive and patriotic youth. The conquest of *the land of Omri*, referred to in the above inscription, may mean either that the king of Israel paid tribute, or, as is not unlikely, it may be a mere inference on the part of the Assyrian conqueror that, as he had vanquished Syria, which held the land of Israel in subjection, he had also vanquished the land of Israel itself. The Assyrian, like other eastern kings, were prone to magnify their military conquests; and as Scripture is silent about the payment of tribute, and as Ramman-Nirari III. would be eager to return in safety to Nineveh with the rich spoil of Damascus, the conjecture that it was a mere inferential conquest seems plausible.

But, however it may be, this shattering of the power of Syria took place in all probability in the year 797 B.C., when Jehoahaz died and his son Joash began to reign as sole king; and would as a natural result materially help to fulfil the prediction which Elisha had made to Joash in the preceding year. Such a terrible blow would cause Syria to relax her hold of the land of Israel, and allow Joash to muster his forces and fight in favourable circumstances for the freedom of his country. And through Joash the Lord in part answered the prayer of Jehoahaz according to the word of Elisha. The sacred historian writes: "And Jehoash (the longer form of Joash) the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad, the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash smite him, and recovered the cities of Israel" (2 Kings xiii. 25).

Perhaps about the time of Elisha's death, when Jonah was about sixteen years of age, Amittai may have sent his gifted son to one of the schools of the prophets. The removal of the great prophet may have led both father and son to aim at repairing as far as possible the loss, and at maintaining the cause of God in the land. As history is silent, we are left to conjecture. And while pursuing his sacred studies the son of Amittai, we

may be sure, observed with interest the outward course of events. The growing strength of the nation, and the repeated successes of Joash over the Syrians, would gladden his heart and inspire him with hope. While perfecting himself in a knowledge of the law, and in all that was needful for his high calling, he may have sought at the same time to sustain the courage of his fellow-countrymen, and diffuse amongst them a knowledge and love of the truth. It is not at all unlikely that he was recognised as a prophet for some years before the death of Joash; but then at all events, when he was about thirty years of age, Jonah became the most conspicuous and influential prophet in Israel. The death of Joash, the brilliant and successful ruler, and perhaps the fear that the Syrians would take advantage of the inexperience of their young king, Jeroboam II., would cast a dark cloud of despondency over the nation. They would be prone to fear that the sun of their prosperity had gone down, and that now a dark night of miserable oppression, such as they had had under Jehoahaz, was about to overshadow them. "The heart of the people was moved, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind." But in that ominous crisis Jonah lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and proclaimed that, instead of

coming disaster and defeat, the Lord would bring to them under Jeroboam II. greater glory and success, and would restore the ancient boundaries of the kingdom from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, that is, the Dead Sea. And through the preaching of Jonah and the favouring providence of God this prediction, as the sacred historian informs us, was literally fulfilled (2 Kings xiv. 25). Between the last prediction of Elisha, in the beginning of the reign of Joash, and the first recorded prediction of Jonah, in the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam II., there was an interval of probably not more than fourteen years. And Jonah may have prophesied several years before this. Instead, therefore, of coming about seventy years after Elisha, as an eminent writer asserts,* the two prophets were almost contemporaries.

* Raleigh, "The Story of Jonah," p. 8.

SYNCHRONISMS.

Sovereigns of Judah.			Sovereigns of Israel.		
Athaliah - - -		1	1		Jehu
In 7th of Jehu (2 K. 12^1)		6	6		
Joash - - -		1	7		
		22	28		
		23	1		Jehoahaz in 23rd of Joash (2 K. 13^1)
		37	15	(1)	Jehoash in 37th of Joash (2 K. 13^{10})
In 2nd of Jehoash (2 K 14^1) Amaziah -	(1)	38	16	(2)	
-	(2)	39	17	(3)	
	(3)	40	4	(1)	Sole King
	(1)	4	5	(2)	
		6	7	(4)	
	(12)	15	16	(13)	Jeroboam II. in 15th of Amaziah (2 K. 14^{23})

This table is taken from the article "Chronology" in Dr Hastings' Bible Dictionary, the only difference being that two mistakes in the reign of Amaziah are corrected. The (1) sole year of his reign, which is placed alongside of 6, the number showing the length of his entire reign, ought to have been placed alongside of 4, inasmuch as the first three years of his reign were spent in reigning along with his father. And the second mistake is in making the number of years in which Amaziah reigned alone only (10), when it ought to have been (12). Such mistakes are very easily made. It will be seen from the table that Jehoash (or Joash), king of Israel, had reigned three years as co-regent with his father, Jehoahaz, before he became sole king.

CHAPTER II.

JONAH'S COMMISSION TO NINEVEH.

(Chapter I. 1, 2.)

"There is a time, and Justice marks the date,
For long forbearing clemency to wait;
That hour elapsed, the incurable revolt
Is punished, and down comes the thunderbolt.
Nineveh, Babylon, and ancient Rome,
Speak to the present time, and times to come;
They cry aloud in every careless ear,
Stop, while ye may; suspend your mad career;
O learn from our example and our fate,
Learn wisdom and repentance ere too late."

—*Cowper.*

THE Book of Jonah in its opening sentence strikes the chord of historic truth. It begins after the manner of the prophets: "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai." It seems evident that the prophet here spoken of, and the one whose early career we have sought in the previous chapter to depict, are one and the same. It is extremely improbable that there would be two

prophets having the same uncommon name of Jonah, and having fathers with the same uncommon name of Amittai. Besides, the only prophet Jonah known to the Jews was Jonah of Gath-hepher. It is morally certain, therefore, that the Jonah of the book called by his name is the Jonah who prophesied in the days of Jeroboam II.

"And the word of the Lord came unto" this well known prophet. This form of speech is the common mode of expressing that a Divine communication had been made to a prophet. You meet with it at least seven times in the history of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 2, 8; xviii. 1; xix. 9; xxi. 17, 28). You often meet with it in the writings of the prophets, as, *e.g.*, "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea the son of Beeri" (Hos. i. 1), and "The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel" (Joel i. 1). Hence the prophets in delivering their messages often used the words, "Thus saith the Lord," and "Hear ye the word of the Lord;" and hence the event is often described as taking place "according to the word of the Lord" spoken by the prophet. To suppose, then, that the Divine communication here spoken of as made to Jonah, and all the things represented in the book as having befallen or been done by him, are fictions, imagined for purposes of instruc-

tion by some unknown writer in later times, is surely to outrage the sacred form of truth, and to forget that this little book is part of a larger one in which it is declared that "it is impossible for God to lie," and that "all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone" (1 Sam. xv. 29; Heb. vi. 18; Rev. xxi. 8).

The book of Jonah begins with a word which, though translated "Now," literally means "And." The word is the common link of historical connection, and in using it the writer of this book doubtless had before his mind more or less consciously something with which he connected it. The opinion that it was a larger work, of which this book is a fragment, we may at once dismiss, as we find other complete books, like "Ruth" and "Esther," beginning in the same way. The, opinion which is held by Dr Pusey and others that the thing contemplated was *the previous written Scriptures* is not improbable. The writers of the historical books who begin them with this connecting particle, intended in all probability to link the later histories to the former. The writer of Joshua would think of connecting his book with the historical books of the Pentateuch, the writer of Judges with Joshua, the writer of I. and II. Samuel with Judges, and so on. And in like manner it is

thought that the writer of Jonah looked upon his book as an addition to the existing Scriptures. Dr Pusey thus nobly expresses it: "The word And, then, joins on histories with histories, revelations with revelations, uniting in one the histories of God's works and words, and blending the books of Holy Scripture into one Divine book."

But while the connecting link at the beginning of this book is suggestive of the grand truth of Bible unity, it seems doubtful if such an idea was in the mind of the writer when he used it. Possibly he thought only of *foregoing events in general.* He would connect his book with the preceding general history of his country. The operative idea seems to be that all events or series of events are united together by a link of dependence, and the word *And* is intended to express this.

The word of the Lord, which came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, is thus stated in the 2nd verse: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me."

The founder of Nineveh was Nimrod. This great hero of primeval times, who seems to have been the founder, or at least the first distinguished head of the Babylonian empire, is described as "a mighty one in the earth," and "a mighty hunter

before the Lord." His fame as a conqueror was so great, that people in after times were in the habit of likening other great conquerors to him, and it became a proverbial saying, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord." His personality so deeply impressed the minds of men, that his name is still found in connection with places in eastern lands, as *e.g.*, Birs Nimroud, the ancient Borsippa, near the ruins of Babylon, Tel Nimroud, near Bagdad, the dam Suhr el-Nimroud, across the Tigris, near Mosul, and the Mound of Nimroud, which lies between the Tigris and its tributary, the Great Zab. It is also to be noted that the prophet Micah calls Assyria the land of Nimrod (Micah v. 6).

According to the Revised Version, we read of this famous warrior, the beginning of whose kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar (Ancient Babylonia), "Out of that land he went forth into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (the same is the great city)" (Gen. x. 8-12). This new translation seems to be generally accepted by modern scholarship. And the statement that the Assyrian empire was originally an offshoot from the Babylonian is regarded by Professor Hommel as certain from

its writing, learning, and religion ("Assyria," p. 180a, in Dr Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible).

Some have with much probability identified Nimrod with Merodach, the patron deity of Babylon. The old derivation of Nimrod from *marad*, "to rebel," though Pusey declared that there was no other even plausible etymology, has been rejected as untenable. As Merodach, or its full form Amaruduk, is supposed to mean "the brightness of day," Nimrod, if it be the same word, would be an appropriate title for the national hero who, in the estimation of his fellow-countrymen, brought such light and glory to the land. And the Babylonians, according to the custom of the superstitious nations of antiquity, transformed their hero after his death into a god, and made him the son of Ea, "the lord of the earth." The name of the city of Nineveh, which Nimrod founded, seems to favour this opinion. "The name of Nineveh," says Professor Sayce, "is written Ninuā and Ninā in the cuneiform inscriptions," and Ninā in the Babylonian mythology was the daughter of Ea, the lord of the earth. Both Merodach and Nina are thus represented as the offspring of the same god, and that fact seems to suggest that Nina, whose name Nimrod gave to the new city, was his sister, or, perhaps more probably, his royal consort, whom he sought in this way to honour. Nina, too,

is identified with the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess Ishtar, the same as the Phœnician goddess Astoreth or Astarte, whose worship is so often mentioned in the Old Testament. Thus early did men in their imagined wisdom "change the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man" (Rom. i. 23).

The original city of Nineveh lay on the east side of the Tigris, opposite the modern town of Mosul, which lies on the west side. Its ruins consist chiefly of two great mounds, Kouyunjik and Nebi Yunas (Prophet Jonah), and the remains of the ancient city walls. The fact that one of the mounds is called Nebi Yunas, on account of its supposed tomb of the prophet, is evidence of the deep-seated belief that Jonah visited Nineveh. The river Khoser, which rises in the mountains to the east of the plain of the Tigris, flows between the two great mounds, and so would run right through the centre of Nineveh into the Tigris. The mound of Kouyunjik, which lies to the north of the Khoser, covers the site of two palaces, the palace of Sennacherib on its south side, and that of Assur-bani-pal on its north side: and the mound of Nebi Yunas, which lies to the south of the Khoser, covers the site of another palace of Sennacherib and of one built by Esarhaddon, both of which were inferior in size and

splendour to the two former. The city walls, which were nearly rectangular in shape, rose to a great height, and were protected by towers and pierced by gates. They enclosed about 1800 acres, and had a circumference of about seven and a half miles.

But in the course of time the original city of Nineveh grew, and absorbed the other cities founded by Nimrod, and gave its name to the whole, as the city of London has done to its surrounding towns and villages. Two things lead to this belief. One is *the assertion of the sacred narrative.* The words of the Revised Version (Gen. x. 11), "the same is the great city," are now generally understood to refer, not to Resen, the last mentioned, but to all the four cities considered as a whole. The four cities seem to have been built in the same plain to the east of the Tigris, and comparatively near one another. The mound Nimroud, which lies about sixteen miles to the south of the original city of Nineveh and to the north of the tributary of the Great Zab, is with much probability identified as the site of the city of Calah, and the ruins at Selaminah, which lie from three to six miles to the north of the mound Nimroud, are supposed to be the site of Resen, which is described as between Nineveh and Calah. Rehoboth-Ir might be near the site of Khorsabad or Karamless, the

one about twelve miles to the east of Nineveh, and the other about twenty miles to the south east, or even to the north of Nineveh, where there are extensive ruins. Though the site of the city is unknown we may be sure that it was at no great distance from the original city of Nineveh. And so in the growth of centuries it was possible for these four cities to be united together and become practically one.

The other reason for the belief is, *the immense size ascribed to Nineveh both in this book and by the ancient historians.* It is spoken of in this book as "that great city," and "an exceeding great city of three days' journey," or a city with a circumference of about sixty miles. And the language of the ancient historians is in striking harmony with this description. Strabo, who was born in Pontus in Asia Minor, probably about 63 B.C., says that Nineveh was much larger than Babylon. This agrees with the representation of Diodorus Siculus, who was born in Sicily probably many years before Strabo. According to him the whole circuit of Babylon was 365 furlongs, while that of Nineveh was 480 furlongs, or sixty miles. Herodotus, the greatest traveller of his age, who in his search for knowledge visited Babylon and Susa, and who was born at Halicarnassus, in the south west of Asia

Minor about 484 B.C., says that the diameter of Nineveh was 150 furlongs (nearly nineteen miles), and that its walls were 100 feet high, flanked with 1500 towers, each 200 feet high, and that its walls were so broad as to allow three chariots to run abreast.

And while these statements of the Greek historians, as resting perhaps mainly on mere rumour, ought to be received with caution, it is noteworthy that *the present day ruins bear them out as to the immense size of the city.* The four great mounds, Kouyunjik (the original city of Nineveh), Nimroud (Calah), Khorsabad (perhaps Rehoboth-Ir), and Karamless, which are connected together by the sameness of the ruins, form a parallelogram of fully sixty miles in circumference, or an ordinary three days' journey. According to a trigonometrical survey of Captain Jones, referred to by Layard in his "Nineveh," the entire circuit is but sixty-one and a half English miles. The joint testimony of all the historians as to the vast size of Nineveh, and the correspondence of the ruins with their testimony, clearly point to the fact that the original city of Nineveh had in the course of time incorporated the other three and given its name to the whole. The testimony of these ancient Greek historians, and the results of recent exploration at the site of that

world-renowned Assyrian capital, combine to give the impression that we are dealing in this book, not with fiction, but with actual history.

The question *as to the time when Jonah was sent to Nineveh* is both interesting and perplexing, as well as pertinent to the matter of the magnitude of the capital. Great though Nineveh must have been then, it had not, I believe, reached the height of its greatness and splendour. It seems to me that much, if not all, of what now forms the ruins of Khorsabad had then no existence. Professor Sayce says of this great mound: "Khorsabad, still called Sarghûn by the Mohammedan writer Yakût in the fourteenth century, is the site of the palace and city founded by Sargon in 707 B.C., the remains of which were excavated by Botta" ("Nineveh," in Dr Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible). This Sargon, the father of the well known Sennacherib, whose name occurs only once in the Bible (Is. xx. 1), began to reign on the eve of the Fall of Samaria and the captivity of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, and so a great many years after the time of Jonah. As the Assyrian Empire lasted about one hundred years after Sargon—Nineveh fell in 606 B.C.—and as the most prosperous period of its power began with the reign of Tiglathpileser III. (called also Pul) about 745 B.C., it is reasonable to think that

Nineveh may have grown in size and splendour after the mission of Jonah. Still, as there are other ruins outside the parallelogram of six and a half miles in circumference, Nineveh in the days of Jonah might well have been sixty miles in circumference, or "an exceeding great city of three days' journey."

As to the time of Jonah's mission, expositors are for the most part strikingly hazy and indistinct. They remind one of the Syrian archer at the battle of Ramoth-Gilead who drew his bow at a venture, but unlike that famous bowman, they have failed to hit the mark. The conclusion to which I have come, after much thought and research, is that the mission of Jonah to Nineveh took place *about* 764 B.C., *in the 20th year of the reign of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, when Assurdan III. ruled at Nineveh over the Assyrian empire.* The following reasons may be given :—

(1) It is *extremely improbable that the mission of Jonah to Nineveh took place before the prediction regarding the extension of the ancient boundaries of the kingdom.* The importance of the mission to the great capital of the mighty Assyrian empire seems to demand that Jonah should be a prophet of established fame. Serious and difficult enterprises are in general entrusted, not to novices, but

experienced veterans. To send a young and unknown prophet to announce judgment to such a city as Nineveh seems scarcely fair to the messenger or respectful to the Assyrian monarch. In the mouth of such an one the message would fail to carry weight. The condition of Israel also for very many years before the reign of Jeroboam II. seems to make such a mission most unlikely. The great power which then inspired the land of Israel with dread was Syria and not Assyria. The land of Israel had been sorely oppressed by Hazael during the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz, and it had only partially recovered its lost dominion and freedom through the valour of Joash, so that in these circumstances the overmastering dread of Assyria which animated Jonah seems hard to understand. Besides, the history of Assyria during that period, which is fairly well known, seems to leave no room for such a mission.

(2) Again, it is *most unlikely that the mission of Jonah to Nineveh took place before the fulfilment of his prediction regarding the restoration of the ancient boundaries of the kingdom.* This prediction, as we have seen, was made in all probability at the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam II., when the death of his victorious father Joash had cast a dark cloud of despondency over the land; and as Jero-

boam II., who reigned for the long period of forty-one years, seems to have been very young at the death of his father, it is more than likely that the most he could do for many years would be to hold his own against the power of Syria. This triumphant success was probably due to an attack which Assurdan III., the king of Assyria, made on Damascus in the eleventh or twelfth year of his reign over Israel. This weakening of the power of Syria which would make it easier for Jeroboam II. to vanquish Ben-hadad and restore the ancient boundaries of his kingdom, would at the same time bring the power of Assyria vividly before the mind of the Israelitish nation. As the attack on Damascus was made by Assurdan III. about the twelfth year of the reign of Jeroboam II., we cannot be far wrong in supposing that the complete triumph of Jeroboam II. over Syria took place one or two years afterwards. But so long as the promised success of Israel remained unfulfilled, Jonah would be inspired by the hope of his country's welfare, and with such a hope he could not have felt the overmastering dread of Assyria which he seems to have had when he was commanded to go to Nineveh. The only satisfactory explanation of Jonah's excessive fear seems to be that the command was given some time after the complete

success of Jeroboam II. And the history of Assyria, so far as we know it, is in perfect harmony with that conclusion.

(3) Once more, *all the circumstances of the time are favourable to the opinion that the mission of Jonah took place about the twentieth year of the reign of Jeroboam II. in* 764 B.C. The land of Israel was then more prosperous than it had ever been since it became a separate kingdom. God's gracious answer to the prayer of Jehoahaz had been fully realised. Out of compassion for their miseries and respect for His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He had completely delivered them out of the hands of the Syrians, and raised them to a height of prosperity and power unexampled in their history. This extraordinary prosperity, which had now lasted for five or six years, had indeed been sadly abused. Instead of leading to repentance, as God intended, it had tended to moral and religious degeneracy. This is seen from the writings of Hosea and Amos. But the shortness of this period of probation makes it extremely likely that some more years elapsed before Hosea and Amos foretold the impending doom of the kingdom. And the mission of Jonah to Nineveh is quite in keeping with this period of longsuffering patience.

Besides, the contemporary history of Assyria

furnishes an equally suitable period. Assurdan III. was the reigning king at Nineveh. His reign began in 772 B.C., which was the twelfth year of the reign of Jeroboam II. The only warlike expeditions recorded of him are the one which he made against Damascus in the beginning of his reign, and another which he afterwards made against the mountainous region of Gannanati, near the modern Hulwân. The silence of the monuments leaves an open space for the mission of Jonah about 764 B.C., the eighth year of his reign and the twentieth year of the reign of Jeroboam II.; and one strong reason for thinking that the repentance of Nineveh took place in that year is that, in the following year, 763 B.C., there was a revolt at Assur, the old capital, about fifty miles to the south of Nineveh, which lasted for the long period of six years. Nineveh's inactivity in making predatory incursions, naturally flowing from its repentance, is an adequate explanation for such a serious revolt. The whole circumstances both of Assyria and the land of Israel seem to make it almost certain that Jonah's mission to Nineveh took place about the year 764 B.C.

We are not told where Jonah was when the word of the Lord came to him. It has generally been taken for granted that he was at his native village of Gath-hepher, but it seems more likely that he

was at Samaria, the residence of the court and the seat of government. But wherever he might be, he was, we may be sure, doing his utmost to stem the rising tide of impiety and corruption, and to stir up the people to gratitude for the wonderful success with which God had crowned their arms. His prophetic work amongst them was toilsome, and seemingly in vain. He would be often ready to say in the mournful language of a later prophet, "Who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" It was possibly when the sorrowful prophet was asleep after his depressing day's labour, or when he was sadly brooding over the moral and religious degeneracy of his country, that the Divine voice sounded in his ears: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

The summons is abrupt and peremptory, like that of a master to his servant or a sovereign to his subject. After the same manner the Lord had often addressed His chosen ones in days gone by. He said to Joshua as he lay encamped in the plains of Moab, "Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to thee" (Josh i. 2). He said to Gideon in the revolt against the Midianites, as he rested by night with his select

300 warriors amongst the hills overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon, "Arise, get thee down into the camp; for I have delivered it into thine hand" (Judg. vii. 9). He said to Samuel at Bethlehem, as he hesitated about the selection of Jesse's youngest son as the Lord's anointed: "Arise, anoint him; for this is he" (1 Sam. xvi. 12). He said to Elijah, as he sheltered himself from the wrath of Ahab in the bed of the Cherith; "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there" (1 Kings xvii. 9). And now He said to Jonah: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it."

The summons, too, implies a sovereign right to obedience, not only over the Hebrew prophet, but over the heathen capital of the Assyrian empire. It shows that He claims to be the God of the Gentiles also. He acts as their Sovereign when He commands His prophet to go and condemn their wickedness, and announce their deserved doom. Such a mission is unique in the ancient history of the chosen people. The prophet of Israel at home indeed often denounced the wickedness of the nations, and foretold the judgments which would overtake them; but Jonah, so far as I am aware, is the only prophet who was ever sent out of the land to warn them of their impending doom.

The God of Israel acted, and could not but always act, as the God of the whole earth. He observed the conduct of men, and dealt with them accordingly in the dispensation of His providence. He has always been "the Governor amongst the nations," "the King of all the earth," and "God over all, blessed for ever." The grand distinction, or at least one of the grand distinctions, between the chosen people and all other nations is, that He spoke directly to the one and not to the other. As a rule, He gave direct communications to the Israelites and not to the Gentiles. The author of the "Hebrews" refers to this distinguishing fact when he begins by saying: "God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son" (Heb. i. 1). But on this occasion God desired to speak directly to the Ninevites through the prophet Jonah, and so gave to the seer of Gath-hepher a direct supernatural message. "The word of the Lord came to him." And in this fact we have an evidence of the distinguishing position held by ancient Israel. To them as a people belonged the lively oracles of God.

The reason which God gave to Jonah for his mission is: "for their wickedness is come up before

me." The language conveys the idea of greatness. The wickedness is supposed to have a voice of such piercing strength as to reach heaven and enter into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. The imagery is common in Scripture. God, *e.g.*, said to Cain: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. iv. 10). He speaks also of the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah as leading Him to come down for its judicial investigation (Gen. xviii. 20, 21). And it is well to remember, as one observes, "that every iniquity has its own voice at the hidden judgment seat of God." Possibly the wickedness of Nineveh here specially referred to is its outstanding sin of cruel oppression. The prophet Nahum says of it: "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departeth not" (Nahum iii. 1). And Layard in his "Nineveh and Babylon" observes, "The Assyrian records are nothing but a dry register of military campaigns, expeditions, and cruelties." And as the Lord executeth judgment for all that are oppressed, He said to Jonah: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

Probable Dates and Order of Events.

B.C.

854 The battle of Karkar, in which the allies, of whom Ahab was one, were defeated by Shalmanezer II., king of Assyria.
842 Jehu pays tribute to Shalmanezer II.
—— The first year of Jehu's reign.
824 Samsi-Ramman IV., son of Shalmanezer II., began to reign.
814 Jehoahaz, king of Israel, began to reign.
—— Birth of Jonah.
811 Ramman Nirari III., son of Samsi Ramman IV., began to reign.
798 Elisha's prophecy to Joash.
797 An Assyrian expedition against Damascus.
784 Jeroboam II. began to reign.
—— Jonah's prophecy in II. Kings xiv. 25.
782 Shalmanezer III. succeeded Ramman Nirari III.
772 Assurdan III. succeeded Shalmanezer III.
—— An Assyrian attack on Damascus.
764 Jonah's mission to Nineveh.
—— The book of Jonah composed by the prophet.
763 Revolt at Assur.

CHAPTER III.

THE FLIGHT.

(Chapter I. 3.)

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea:
Even there shall Thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me."

—PSALM CXXXIX. 7-10.

GOD said to Jonah (Dove) "Arise," and he arose; but, instead of flying to Nineveh, he directed his flight in the opposite direction. The flight of the prophet is almost as wonderful and striking as any other incident in his remarkable career. There could be no misunderstanding of the Divine command on account of its complex or enigmatic character. Nothing could be simpler and clearer than the words: "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it." Then the person

who disobeyed was a venerable and distinguished prophet of the Lord. Had he been an ordinary citizen or a young prophet at the beginning of his career, the disobedience would not have seemed so strange; but he was a prophet of long and faithful service, and perhaps the most honoured and honourable man of his time. Besides, he disobeyed with resolution and impetuosity. He did not go in the opposite direction with slow and faltering steps, but in hot haste. He arose up to flee. He acted as if it were a matter of life and death to escape.

Tarshish, wherever it might be, was looked upon as at a great distance from Palestine. The ships that traded with it came to be regarded as a name for the largest and strongest ships afloat. The phrase "ships of Tarshish" was used in the same general sense as that of "East-Indiamen" used to be in our own land. This seems to be the meaning of the phrase in such passages as these: "With the east wind thou breakest the ships of Tarshish" (Ps. xlviii. 7); "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the Lord thy God" (Is. lx. 9); and "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold" (1 Kings xxii. 48). Several

opinions have been held as to its locality. Josephus understood it to be Tarsus in Cilicia, the birth-place of the apostle Paul. Another Jewish tradition connected it with Carthage, in the north of Africa, near the modern town of Tunis. A third view, which has been supported by Cheyne and Max Müller, is that Tarshish was in Italy. But the general opinion, which seems by far the most probable, is that Tarshish was Tartessus in Spain, a name which seems to have belonged both to a city and a region bordering on the Guadalquiver. Besides the similarity of name, there are several things which seem strongly to commend this view. Both places were closely connected with the Phœnicians. According to Strabo, the Phœnicians had settlements in Spain beyond the Pillars of Hercules soon after the Trojan war. Both places had similar articles of commerce; and both conveyed the idea of remoteness. Tarshish seems to have been to the Hebrews what Tartessus was to the poet Ovid, the end of the world in the west, the region of the setting sun. And in going to Tarshish Jonah sought to escape from the presence of the Lord.

The phrase, *the Presence of the Lord*, evidently means His manifested Presence. It occurs for the first time in Scripture in connection with the

history of Cain. After the Lord had passed sentence on him for the murder of his brother Abel, and had doomed him to be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, Cain said amongst other things in reply: "Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face shall I be hid." And soon after we read: "And Cain went out from the Presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden" (Gen. iv. 10–16). The region of Eden was thought of as the seat of the Divine Presence, because here, where he once had held familiar intercourse with man, were still to be found evident and unmistakable tokens of the fact, such as the cherubim and the flaming sword which guarded the way to the tree of life, the visible acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, and occasional direct personal communications such as that given to Cain. Hence, to depart from the region where God made Himself known was described as a going out from the Presence of the Lord. And as Palestine was, like Eden, the land of the manifested Presence, inasmuch as it had the luminous cloud which dwelt between the cherubim in the temple, and prophets who received direct personal communications from the Most High, Jonah in seeking to flee from the Holy Land is naturally described in the same

way as seeking to escape from the Presence of the Lord.

But, as Jonah was a prophet, the phrase in his case meant something more. He dwelt not only in the land of the Divine Presence, but in the Divine Presence itself. It was his office to stand in the presence of the Great King and to take orders from His mouth. When Obadiah hesitated to go and say to Ahab, "Behold, Elijah is here!" being afraid that the prophet, who instructed him, might be carried away by the Spirit, and that when he was not found the disappointed king would kill him, Elijah thus dispelled his fears: "As the Lord of hosts liveth, *before whom I stand*, I will surely show myself unto him to-day" (1 Kings xviii. 8–15). Jonah therefore, in seeking to flee from the Presence of the Lord, sought to abandon his office as prophet. The aversion to the revealed will of God, which could lead a prophet of long standing to abandon his office and go away with the speed of a fugitive into a land of heathen darkness, must have been deep-seated and overwhelmingly strong. Besides, such intense revulsion of soul on the part of one of the best men of his day, is a striking proof that the revelation which produced it was not evolved from his own experience, but came from a higher source.

But while the phrase, *from the Presence of the Lord*, is to be understood as referring to the land of Palestine, and his position as a prophet, Jonah's flight suggests the question, "Was he ignorant of the fact of the Divine omnipresence?" Though the doctrine was not so clearly revealed then as now, I have no doubt that, if Jonah had been interviewed during his calm hours of reflection, he would have declared that God was everywhere present. It seems certain that he would, if David, according to the title, wrote the 139th Psalm. In that magnificent ode, which Aben Ezra pronounced to be the crown of all the psalms, the poetic seer exclaims: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. cxxxix. 7-10). After such a clear utterance no pious Israelite, and especially no true prophet, could have any doubt as to this article of belief. To infer from Jonah's flight, either that the psalm was not then written, or that he was ignorant of it, is hazardous in the extreme. There are multitudes of Christians to-day familiar with the 139th Psalm,

and who assert as one of the articles of their faith the Divine omnipresence, who notwithstanding are often found feeling and acting as if they were not in the Presence of God. They practically deny what they theoretically believe. And on this occasion that was very probably the case with the prophet Jonah. In the strong revulsion of his soul against the Divine command he seems to have thought that, if he could only get away from the land of the manifested Presence of God into remote Tarshish, he would be able to leave his prophetic office behind him, and live henceforth in freedom and peace.

The place to which Jonah fled, that he might get a ship to take him to the distant land of Tarshish, was Joppa, now Jaffa, one of the oldest and most interesting sea-ports in the world. It is situated on the west coast of Palestine, about thirty miles to the south of Cæsarea, and about forty miles to the north-west of Jerusalem. The town is built on a rounded hill, the summit of which is 153 feet above the level of the sea. Its natural position well merits the name of Joppa, which means "Beauty." To the north and south of it are sand hills; and to the east gardens, nearly three miles square, which produce a great variety of fruits and vegetables. The grapes are delicious and abundant; and the

oranges are unrivalled and largely exported. In front of the town, to the west, a semi-circular belt of rocks, with a wide opening to the north and a narrow one in the centre, forms a large but shallow harbour, which can only be entered by small boats. Steamers to-day anchor in the roadstead half-a-mile from the shore. The old harbour may have been the small bay to the south of the town, called "the Moonpool."

Joppa is mentioned in the lists of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Thothmes III., when the children of Israel were probably in bondage in Egypt. It is first noticed in Scripture in connection with the building of Solomon's temple. Thither Hiram, king of Tyre, conveyed by sea on rafts the cedar and the pine wood that Solomon needed for that magnificent stucture (1 Kings v. 8, 9); and it was to Joppa that wood was brought from mount Lebanon in the same way for the building of the Second Temple under Zerubbabel (Ezra iii. 7). There, too, it is interesting to remember in connection with the history of Jonah, Peter on the housetop of Simon the tanner had his wonderful vision, in which the distinction between the clean and the unclean was declared to be abolished; and it was from this place that he went forth to preach the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius and his com-

pany at Cæsarea (Acts x.). Jonah at Joppa, on the other hand, sought to escape from preaching to the Gentiles. The native bent of both was adverse to such a mission; but that of Jonah was much the stronger.

On reaching Joppa Jonah found a ship on the eve of sailing to Tarshish. As the Hebrews were not a commercial people, though Solomon did not a little to stir up amongst them a spirit of business enterprise, it may seem strange that a ship of Tarshish should be found there; but as Joppa, according to Josephus (Antiq. xiii. 15, 4), originally belonged to Phœnicia, it is very likely that some Phœnicians still lived there and maintained mercantile relations with Tyre, the greatest commercial city of the ancient world, and the chief owner of the ships that made voyages to Tarshish. Possibly ships from Tyre might make Joppa a regular place of call on the way to that distant colony. Having found the ship he paid the fare, and went down into the cabin to rest himself after his long and toilsome journey. Everything thus far was favourable to the execution of his purpose; but favouring circumstances in providence are not always a sure evidence that one is in the way of duty. The downward path may be smooth and easy for a time.

One may well ask, *Why was Jonah, a prophet of long and honourable standing, so resolutely opposed to the Divine command?* Stress has been laid by some on *the difficulties and dangers of the mission to Nineveh.* It was indeed a most formidable journey in these troublous times, to go from the land of Israel to the distant city of Nineveh on the banks of the Tigris. The prophet would have to travel for several weeks through the midst of warlike and heathen people; and in addition to the hardships and risks of the journey, there was the still more formidable danger of exposing and denouncing the sins of the most warlike and powerful city in the world. Canon Farrar, who adopts this explanation of Jonah's flight, says: "The duty was so terrible, it involved such a vast self-sacrifice, that he fled from its fulfilment. In Israel, in any country, the true prophet has enough of hardships, of misrepresentation, of religious hatred, and of irreligious hatred to bear; but what were the self-denials of a witness for God in Samaria compared with those which he would have to face in going alone to the mighty capital of Assyria, the dwelling place (as Nahum calls it) of the lion, and the feeding place of the young lion? The hair-garment and leathern girdle of the prophet were known in Israel, and if they were not

honoured, they were at least tolerated; but what would be the attentions accorded to the wandering Jewish stranger in the bloody and luxurious city of the heathen? What sort of reception could he expect from kings of the type of Sargon or Assurbanipal? Jonah, like many more, fled headlong from what he knew to be his duty. Anything seemed to be more tolerable than that" ("The Minor Prophets," p. 237). In this passage the formidable character of the mission can hardly be said to be overdrawn; but there is nothing in the history to warrant the opinion that this was the cause of the prophet's flight. As a rule the prophets were the most heroic of men; and, so far as appears, Jonah was not inferior to his order. Had there been nothing but the difficulties and the dangers of the mission, it may be safely said that Jonah would have gone to Nineveh without the slightest hesitation.

Others again have imagined that his strong aversion to the mission sprang from *a regard for his reputation as a prophet.* He was persuaded that if he went, Nineveh would repent and be spared, and he shrank from the shame of being a discredited prophet. There can be no doubt that he dreaded the sparing of Nineveh. He said to God in justification of his displeasure at the sparing of the city: "I pray Thee, O Lord, was

not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil" (iv. 2). In his Commentary on Jonah, Kleinert, who virtually adopts the preceding view of the flight, as he makes the motives which influenced Jonah to be "ease, indolence, and the fear of men," has the audacity to suggest that Jonah's own explanation was a subterfuge "to palliate a guilty conscience, which is glad to seize upon even the semblance of right." This uncharitable suspicion is not only baseless, but discredited by the manifest candour which distinguished the prophet. There are two things about Jonah's own explanation which may well convince us of its truth, one being that in making it he appeals to the Divine knowledge that he is stating the fact, and the other, that the Lord in His reply does not call it in question but expostulates with him on the ground of its truth. He merely said: "Doest thou well to be angry?"

According to Jonah himself, the sparing of Nineveh which so displeased him was the very thing, the dread of which had caused him to flee unto Tarshish. The cause of his flight and that of his displeasure were one and the

same. This is a point which several commentators have overlooked, and so have accounted for the flight in one way and the displeasure in another. Canon Farrar, *e.g.*, ascribes the flight, as we have seen, to the difficulties and dangers of the mission; and then when he comes to the consideration of his displeasure, he ascribes it to an overweening regard for his reputation as a prophet. He says: "It is indeed a revolting thought that a prophet should be very angry because God was merciful; that he should peevishly complain against God, and wish himself dead, because God does not upheave Nineveh with His earthquakes or smite it with His thunderbolts to save his petty personal credit" ("Minor Prophets," p. 241). And in the next page he represents Jonah as saying: "Better that Nineveh perish rather than that I should be proved to have been mistaken." Kleinert is guilty of the same oversight and confusion. He accounts for Jonah's flight by his love of ease, indolence, and fear of men, and then with regard to his displeasure he says: "His displeasure, as Calvin justly admitted, arose from a common littleness of mind, incident to humanity, which, for the moment, thought only of his own honour as a prophet."

But these eminent commentators gravely err, not only in making the causes of the flight

and the displeasure different when Jonah himself makes them the same, but also in ascribing to Jonah such an overweening regard for his reputation as a prophet. Such an explanation, which so belittles the prophet, is not only without warrant, but discredited by the singular candour and humility which he displayed on board the ship; and if Jonah was the author of the book which goes by his name, as the Jews believed, the unvarnished delineation of his faults, combined with its silence about his faithful services on other occasions, are irrefragable evidence of his indifference to fame. This blackening of the character of Jonah is the more blameworthy in Canon Farrar, seeing that in his commentary on the prophet he poses as an advocate of charity, reflecting on those who indulge in harsh judgments of their critical brethren, and exhorting commentators on Jonah to be tolerant of one another's views. Surely charity to the dead is as dutiful as charity to the living; even more dutiful, as the dead cannot answer for themselves.

Others again find the reason of Jonah's flight in *a glowing zeal for the honour of the Divine character.* Dr Martin in his work, "The Prophet Jonah," is a strenuous advocate of this view. He says: "Jonah was afraid lest, the inhabitants of

Nineveh repenting, and the Lord remitting the punishment threatened, the God of the Jews might be regarded as a changeable God" (p. 51). Again, "It was an inconceivable grief to Jonah to utter any denunciation which he saw that, through infinite graciousness, the Lord might yet, through repentance on Nineveh's part, be, humanly speaking, prevailed upon to retract" (p. 53). This view certainly presents Jonah in a nobler and more attractive light than that which we have just considered; but it seems to be equally erroneous. While the former does less, this view seems to do more than justice to the prophet. The idea that Jonah was so sensitive to the Divine honour that he resolutely disobeyed the Divine command to preserve it intact, seems highly visionary and improbable; and there is nothing in the narrative to support it.

The true reason, I have no doubt, is mainly to be found *in Jonah's love of country*. He dreaded the sparing of Nineveh, not because of the discredit which might befall his own reputation as a prophet or the reputation of Israel's God as one "without variableness or shadow of turning," not because of any ill-will which he bore the inhabitants of Nineveh as Gentiles, but because of the disastrous results which it might bring upon his own

land. The land of Israel had at this time nothing to fear from Syria, which had so grievously oppressed them in the preceding reigns of Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash. The power of Ben-hadad had been completely shattered, and the power of Jeroboam II. was supreme, from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah. But Assyria, which had so often in former times made hostile incursions into Syria and the adjoining western lands, and which a few years before had attacked Damascus, might at any moment bear down upon them with its vast and warlike armies. Assyria was to Israel what Napoleon I. was to Great Britain in the beginning of the preceding century, or Russia is to India in our own day. It loomed vast and threatening on the political horizon. One thing, too, which intensified the dread of Jonah was the growing moral degeneracy of his own countrymen. As an ardent lover of his country, he longed for the overthrow of this overshadowing, threatening power; and it was because he believed that the mission to Nineveh would have the effect of averting it, that he was so resolute in his determination not to go. The action of Jonah was no doubt wrong. He was guilty of preferring his own will to that of the Most High and Infinitely Wise God. But, in connection with his

presumptuous self-will, it should be remembered to his credit that it was caused by a patriotism of the most complete self-abnegation. To serve his country he was ready to abandon home and the prophetic office, both of which were dear to him, to go to the ends of the earth and dwell there in lonely exile among the heathen. There have been few, if any, purer-minded and more devoted patriots in the world's history. He was no doubt wrong, grievously wrong; but his wrong-doing assumed the singular form of heroic self-sacrifice. And while condemning the wrong, we ought also to commend what was good and noble.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORM.

(Chap. I. 4-6.)

"You are a counsellor; if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks that you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap.

"All lost! to prayers, to prayers! all lost!"

—*Shakespeare.*

THE ship with Jonah on board seems to have set out on its long voyage to Tarshish soon after he had embarked. It may have been in the last cargo boat that Jonah was rowed out to the large merchantman as it lay at anchor some distance from the shore, and while the sailors were busy in making preparations to take advantage of a favourable breeze. On getting into the ship Jonah seems at once to have gone down into the cabin, partly to escape observation and partly to rest his weary and exhausted frame. As he heard the weighing of the anchor, the shouting of the sailors, and the flapping of the unfurling sails, and

as he mused on his successful flight, the tired and sorrowful prophet fell asleep. For a time the ship went smoothly along, scudding before the wind; and the captain and his men were in high spirits and hope that a pleasant and prosperous voyage was before them. But not many hours after they had left Joppa the scene suddenly and unexpectedly changed. The favourable and temperate breeze became an adverse and furious gale. "The Lord," we are told, "sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken."

It is not necessary to suppose that there was anything miraculous in the raising of the storm. Such storms seem to be common on the west coast of Palestine. Josephus in his history, "The Wars of the Jews," refers to such a storm overtaking the inhabitants of Joppa, who had fled to their ships, and had lain at sea all night out of the reach of the darts of the Roman soldiers. He says: "Now as those people of Joppa were floating about in the sea, in the morning there fell a violent wind upon them; it is called by them that sail there *the black north-wind;* and it dashed their ships one against another" (iii. 9, 3). The storm indeed, that beat upon the ship of Tarshish in which Jonah was a passenger, seems to have been one of unusual

violence. As the sailors, though inured to the dangers of the sea, were afraid, it was perhaps the most formidable they had ever encountered. But the storm was extraordinary, not perhaps from anything miraculous in its origin, but from the special preparation which the Lord had made for it beforehand.

Science has vastly increased man's knowledge of the material forces of nature, and has especially revealed the fact that they act in orderly ways which it calls laws; and as these act necessarily according to their nature, some scientists speak as if those who ascribe their results to God were ignorant and superstitious, and would refer to this fourth verse as an illustration. They seem to imagine that the enlarging of the boundaries of knowledge in the domain of nature narrows the sphere of religion, and that it will ultimately exclude the personal action of God altogether. But true science, instead of strangling religion, is and ought to be its handmaid and helpmeet. Human beings can to some extent control and utilise the blind and methodical material forces for the carrying out of their own plans, and they can do this the more, the better they are acquainted with their necessary laws. And what they can in some measure do, the Infinitely Wise and Almighty

God can do immeasurably more. It is monstrous to suppose that progress in science, which enlarges the scope of human ability, correspondingly limits the scope of the Divine Being. The truth is that God's power over the forces of nature is absolute and complete; and within the sphere of natural law "He is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20). But what is still more marvellous and mysterious, His power over the voluntary movements of men is equally absolute and complete. As Nebuchadnezzar, after his restoration from his inglorious downfall, acknowledged, "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say to Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. iv. 35).

We come now to consider *the action of the sailors in the storm* (v. 5). "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares of the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them." The first thing which the fear-stricken sailors did was *to pray*. Their imminent danger and conscious helplessness led them to cry for Divine succour. Their action was according to the voice of nature. It is the course which men in sore straits are everywhere inclined to take. They may live ungodly in their times of ease, and try to

establish themselves in the belief that there is no God, and that all things are under the dominion of chance or fate; but when overwhelming calamity threatens them, they are often constrained to fall upon their knees and cry to God for deliverance. The force of nature proves too much for their theoretical scepticism. Instinct gets the better of unbelief. Not to pray is contrary to the inmost tendencies of our nature.

But, while the sailors acted naturally and becomingly, they were in gross ignorance of the One Living and True God. "They cried every one unto his god." They were evidently idolatrous Gentiles. Their having different gods seems to imply, what in itself is very probable, that they were of different nationalities. The most of them might be Phœnicians, but others might be Spaniards, Greeks, or Italians. The men were likely to come from the maritime countries and mercantile stations which the ship was in the habit of touching at during its long voyage. The captain would naturally prefer such a varied crew for the sake of their local knowledge and experience. And being idolatrous Gentiles, there were two things fitted to repress their instinctive desire to pray. One is *the diversity of the gods.* Such diversity could not fail to limit and perplex their apprehensions of the Divine knowledge and

power. The suppliants, if they thought of the variety of the gods invoked, might well be in doubt as to which of them had the requisite knowledge and power to answer their prayer. And the other is, *their ignorance of trustworthy and encouraging Divine revelations.* They had no such proofs and assurances as the children of Israel, that God was the hearer of prayer. They could not say with the confidence of faith: "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come" (Ps. lxv. 2); or, "the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them (Ps. cxlv. 18, 19). But, though sadly ignorant, they in their dire distress cried unto their several gods. They did in the circumstances the best they could.

The second thing which the sailors did was *to lighten the ship.* The heavily laden ship in the fury of the tempest was in danger of being engulfed and sinking like lead in the mighty waters. Then, to make it more buoyant and so prevent such a catastrophe, the sailors "cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea." Thus did the sailors on board the storm-tossed ship in which Paul was conveyed a prisoner to Rome. Luke, in his account of that memorable voyage,

mentions that they adopted this course on two occasions. He says in reference to an earlier period of the storm: "And as we laboured exceedingly with the storm, the next day they began to throw the freight overboard; and the third day they cast out with their own hands the tackling of the ship" (Acts. xxvii. 18, 19). In reference to a later period he says: "And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea" (Acts xxvii. 38). Men everywhere and in all ages are ready to sacrifice their worldly goods for the saving of their natural lives. As Satan said: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job ii. 4).

The sailors, in crying unto their several gods and in lightening the ship, did what they could to secure the safety of themselves and the ship. They did not merely pray nor merely use means; they did both. And in all times of danger or distress the right course to ensure safety is to do the same. It is not enough either to pray or to use the most likely means: we should pray as if success depended entirely upon God, and we should labour as if it depended entirely upon ourselves. And what is true in reference to the natural, is equally true in reference to the spiritual life. It is not enough to cry "Lord, save me," we

must be ready to cast forth the wares that would sink us in the depths of the sea. It was just because the rich young ruler was unwilling to part with his great possessions that he failed to gain eternal life. It is not always necessary to cast forth the wares from the storm-tossed ship. Other rich young men may not be required for their safety to sacrifice their wealth: but for the rich young ruler in that tempestuous sea in which he was caught, the unerring Searcher of hearts saw that it was indispensable. Whilst, however, it is not always, or even generally necessary, to sacrifice worldly goods for the safety of the soul, it is always necessary to sacrifice everything that is sinful. Evil habits and desires are wares which cannot be retained without sinking the ship. The prayer-hearing Lord says to every suppliant: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. xvi. 24, 25). Prayer for deliverance must be combined with self-renunciation.

We come now to consider *Jonah in the storm.* It is noteworthy that the storm, which blanched with fear the faces of the hardy and weather-beaten sailors, failed to disturb the fugitive prophet.

While they were praying, each one unto his god, and casting forth the wares into the sea, the man of Gath-hepher was fast asleep in the cabin. The howling of the wind, the dashing of the waves, and the lurching of the ship were unheard. The profound slumber of Jonah in the midst of the tempest, which threatened to engulf the ship, reminds us of that of our Lord on one occasion on the Sea of Galilee. The Prophet greater than Jonah, He on whom the Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested upon him, had been busy all day on the western shores of the lake; and as he was desirous of escaping from the thronging multitudes, He commanded His disciples to set out for the other side. At once they got ready their large fishing-boat, and took Him on board just as He was, and made for the opposite shore; and while the disciples were attending to the sails, the Master lay down on a cushion in the hinder part of the ship to rest Himself, and soon after, under the gentle rocking of the boat and fanning of the evening breeze, fell fast asleep. But by and bye, as so often happens on that inland sea, there arose a great tempest, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves; and, as they heard the howling of the winds and saw the huge tumbling billows breaking over the boat and threatening to bury

them in the sea, these hardy fishermen, like the sailors on board the ship of Tarshish, were afraid, expecting that every moment would be their last. But, while the disciples were full of alarm, the Master was lying in the most peaceful and profound slumber. Like Jonah, he was the only one on board unconscious of the storm.

The causes of the slumber in both were probably similar. Both had been *greatly exhausted by exertion.* Jonah had travelled to Joppa with the utmost speed. His eagerness to reach the seaport, and get a ship that would take him to Tarshish from the Presence of the Lord, was perhaps as intense as that of the thief to escape the clutches of the pursuing officers of justice, or that of the homicide to evade the sword of the avenger of blood. And Jesus had been busy all day in teaching the crowds and healing the sick. Both too were *sorrowful.* Jonah was sad at heart on account of his forsaking the prophetic office and becoming an exile from the land which he so dearly loved; and Jesus was grieved that His words of love and truth had been heard with such dull ears and unreceptive hearts. And physical exhaustion and heart sorrow are powerful soporifics. Worn-out toilers and grief-stricken mourners have always found them to be

so. It was because Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, was completely worn out with the battle and his flight from the field, that he fell into a deep sleep in the house of Jael; and it was because the chosen three, Peter and James and John, were exceeding sorrowful that, though Jesus charged them again and again to watch with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, they speedily fell asleep. As the loving Master said in mitigation of their failure: "The spirit indeed is willing; but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41).

But while Jonah, asleep in the ship of Tarshish amid the storm on the Mediterranean Sea, was like Jesus asleep in the fishing boat amid the storm on the Sea of Galilee, there was an essential difference between them. The fatigue and sorrow which caused the sleep of the one, was brought about by an unbelieving and disobedient heart, while the fatigue and sorrow which caused the sleep of the other, sprang from a heart full of unbounded confidence and love. The profound sleep of the one was that of a rebellious fugitive, while the profound sleep of the other was that of a devoted servant and son. If the inner and deeper life of both sleepers found expression in the realm of dreams, the slumber of the one would be troubled with terrifying visions, while that of

the other would be gladdened with visions of glory and of peace. Possibly both sleepers were wrapt in profound unconsciousness; but ever in their dreamless sleep the underlying life of Jonah would impart to his face a sad, despairing look, while the underlying life of Jesus would impart to Him a happy and hopeful expression. And while the one sleeper was under the frown of God, the other was under His favour.

We now come to consider *the action of the captain of the ship*. After telling us that Jonah had gone down into the inmost parts of the ship and was lying fast asleep, the sacred biographer goes on to say, v. 6, "So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." When the storm suddenly burst upon the sea, and tossed the big ship like a plaything upon the tumbling billows, the captain naturally thought only of his duty. He and his men at once betook themselves to prayer and the lightening of the ship. But after he had done what the emergency called for without any abating of the tempest, the captain, as he looked about him for some possible help, remembered that they had taken on board at Joppa a passenger for Tarshish. And as the sad and weary stranger was

nowhere to be seen on deck, such questions as these might rise to his lips: Where can he be? Has he been washed overboard? Or is it possible that he is still in the cabin whither he went? And so, to satisfy his curiosity, he hastened thither, and found to his amazement the stranger fast asleep.

The first words of his greeting, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" *express wonder and surprise, if not actual displeasure.* It was certainly most wonderful and surprising that a man could sleep in a ship without being awakened by the rocking and the raging of the storm, unconscious of the deadly peril to which he and all on board were exposed. And the sight might well provoke, as well as astonish, the alarmed and anxious captain. Stolid indifference, even when unconscious, is a source of irritation to those who are anxiously alert. But the unconsciousness of the sinner to his deadly peril is even more wonderful and surprising and irritating to those who are spiritually awake and anxious. The sinner is in danger of a more dreadful death. It was only the death of the body through drowning in the sea in the case of Jonah; but in the case of the sinner, it is the destruction of both soul and body in hell. This is a death of which the sinner is in jeopardy every hour. The law of God, which is holy and just and good, pro-

claims in clear and loud-sounding tones, "The soul that sinneth it shall die"; and the only thing which comes between the sinner and his doom is the brittle thread of life, which any of the forces at work may at any moment cut. Besides, there are many and powerful forces of evil bent on his destruction. The condition of the sinner is much more to be dreaded than that of Jonah; and yet there are multitudes who are as profoundly asleep, and insensible to their spiritual danger, as Jonah was to the deadly peril of the storm. To all such we may say, as the captain did to Jonah, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?"

The next words of the greeting are, "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." The alarming situation demanded wakefulness instead of slumber. Jonah was to *arise*. So it ever is in physical danger; and so it ever is equally in spiritual danger. Those who refuse to arise and bestir themselves are guilty of neglecting the duty of self-preservation. And calls to wakefulness are often addressed in Scripture to slumbering sinners and to a slumbering church. To slumbering sinners God through his servants has often said: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. v. 14). To the slumbering Church

He often addresses such exhortations as these: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion" (Isa. lii. 1), and "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1). It was the fault as well as the misfortune of the Ten Virgins in the parable that, while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept; and hence at its close Jesus said to His disciples: "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day or the hour" (Matt. xxv. 13). As Christians are the sons of the light and not of the darkness, Paul says to them, "So, then, let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 6).

The captain summoned Jonah not only to arise, but *to call upon his God.* This heathen sailor was deeply religious, and held in high estimation the value of prayer. He not only took for granted that the unknown stranger would be a worshipper of some god, but believed that if he should arise and call upon him, a gracious answer might be the result. Though his own prayer and those of his crew had as yet been of no avail, he seems to have cherished the hope that the stranger's prayer, added to theirs, might ensure success. The spirit of this heathen shipmaster is strikingly beautiful and worthy of imitation.

But note the words in which the heathen shipmaster expresses *his hope*. He says: "if so be that God (literally *the* God) will think upon us, that we perish not." Dr Pusey in his Commentary observes: "Perhaps the shipmaster had seen something special about Jonah, his manner, or his prophetic garb. He does not only call Jonah's God, *thy God*, as Darius says to Daniel (Dan. vi. 20), but also *the God*, acknowledging the God whom Jonah worshipped to be *the God*. It is not any heathen prayer which he asks Jonah to offer. It is the prayer of the creature in its need to God who can help; but knowing its own ill-desert, and the separation between itself and God, he knows not whether He will help it." This view seems highly improbable. It is extremely unlikely that the shipmaster could have seen anything in or about this unknown stranger that led him at once to leap to the conclusion that *his* God was the true One, and that the gods worshipped by himself and crew were false. The effect is too great for the cause. The tone, too, of his words, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" seems to forbid it. The likelihood seems to be that the shipmaster treated Jonah in the same way as he would have done to any man of the like respectability, whatever had been his religious creed. He did not imagine Jonah's God to

be superior to theirs. He only thought that Jonah had a God, and that his calling upon Him, added to their calling upon theirs, might have the effect of leading the Great Supreme to help them in their sore distress. The shipmaster seems to have looked upon *the God* as quite distinct, not only from the gods which he and his fellow-sailors worshipped, but also from the God worshipped by Jonah. Such an idea, I believe, is sometimes entertained by idolaters in our own day. Though in much darkness the shipmaster was one of those who "seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him" (Acts xvii. 27).

The brave and superstitious captain of this Tarshish ship was an admirable religious teacher. His words to Jonah perfectly fitted both the outward circumstances and the spiritual condition of the prophet. He spoke not only the duty of the hour, but in the manner best adapted to convince the erring fugitive of his sin. His words, as he shouted them into his ear, must have awakened his spiritual as well as his physical senses. And to be reproved and instructed by one of the despised idolatrous Gentiles must have been very humbling to a prophet of the chosen people. For a moment, when aroused out of sleep, he was doubtless bewildered ; but when he came to see the real state of affairs, he would, I

am inclined to think, be filled with shame and confusion of face; and, although we are not told so in the narrative, he very probably took the advice of the captain and began to pray. But the prayer of the prophet was in vain. The storm continued to rage with unabated fury, and all on board were expecting every moment to be hurled with the ship to the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER V.

CASTING OF THE LOT.

(Chap. I. 7-9.)

"Deep is the judgment which conceals
The movement of its mystic wheels,
But Wisdom guides them in their grooves,
And the same spirit in them moves.
The far connecting links are dim,
Unseen the fine-vibrating springs,
But the high end is praise to Him
Whose finger shaped the dreadful rings."

—*J. D. Burns.*

THE captain and his men had done their utmost to ensure the safety of the ship. They had prayed, each one to his god, and they had lightened the ship. The captain, too, had aroused the sleeping passenger and summoned him to prayer. But as the storm still raged with unabated fury and threatened to engulf the ship, the open-minded, superstitious seamen were impressed with the idea that some one on board must have pro-

voked the anger of the gods. Mankind everywhere, through the natural workings of conscience, instinctively connect remarkable adverse providences with guilt. They have the inward conviction that sin deserves to be punished, and that there is a Nemesis in the course of events. And while they are no doubt often wrong (as, *e.g.*, the three friends of Job in reference to his great misfortunes, the Jews in reference to the man born blind, and the inhabitants of Melita in reference to the viper which had fastened on the hand of Paul), these heathen sailors, according to the Divine purpose and plan, were correct in their conclusion. The storm was indeed due to the sins of one on board. And so, we are told in the 7th verse, "They said every one to his fellow, Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us."

The custom of resorting to the lot seems to have been common in ancient times. Homer, who lived long before the time of Jonah, represents the Greeks in their war with Troy using the lot. Hector, the great hero of the Trojans, had challenged any of the Greeks to single combat; and as nine of their noblest warriors were eager to accept the challenge, the lot was recommended as the means for determining the champion.

"Lest thirst for glory your brave souls divide,
What chief shall combat, let the lots decide.
Whom heaven shall choose, be his the chance to raise
His country's fame, his own immortal praise.
The lots produced, each hero signs his own;
Then in the gen'ral's helm the fates are thrown,
The people pray, with lifted eyes and hands,
And vows like these ascend from all the bands:
'Grant, thou Almighty! in whose hand is fate,
A worthy champion for the Grecian state.
This task let Ajax or Tydides prove,
Or he, the king of kings, beloved by Jove.'
Old Nestor shook the casque. By heaven inspired,
Leaped forth the lot, of every Greek desired.
This from the right to left the herald bears,
Held out in order to the Grecian peers:
Each to his rival yields the mark unknown,
Till godlike Ajax finds the lot his own;
Surveys the inscription with rejoicing eyes,
Then casts before him, and with transport cries:
'Warriors! I claim the lot, and arm with joy;
Be mine the conquest of this chief of Troy.'"
—*Illiad*, vii. 207-228. Pope's Translation.

So far as man is concerned, this mode of discovering the mind of God is the purest chance. Any one of the marked stones or articles, used as lots, might fall out of the shaken vessel; and yet God so overruled this hap-hazard process as to lead unerringly to the truth. It was a striking illustration on a small scale, not only of His omnis-

cience, but of his complete and masterly control over the complicated affairs of human life. Possibly the custom of casting lots originated in superstition. Believing that the world was under the dominion of fortune or fate, as most ancient nations seem to have done, they sought to honour the overruling deity, and get his mind on any matter, by using a system of pure chance. But however the custom may have originated, God gave it His sanction in the case of the chosen people. Of the two goats, the one which was to be offered to the Lord, and the other which was to be sent into the wilderness, were to be determined by lot (Lev. xvi. 8-10). The land of Canaan, according to the Divine command, was decided by lot (Num. xxvi. 52-56; Josh. xix. 51). The cities of the Levites were also assigned to them by lot (Josh. xxi. 4-40). It was by lot that Achan was discovered out of the whole host of Israel as the taker of the accursed thing from the city of Jericho (Josh. vii. 16-26); and it was by lot that Saul, the son of Kish, was chosen to be the first king of Israel (1 Sam. x. 17-24). Other cases are mentioned in Scripture in which the chosen people used the lot, as when the children of Israel went up to fight against Gibeah, and when Jonathan was discovered as the violator of his father's oath (Judges xx. 9; 1 Sam. xiv. 38-46).

It is very suggestive that the last time in which they are mentioned as using the lot, was when the Eleven chose a successor to Judas some time before the day of Pentecost (Acts i. 15-26). The efficiency which God gave to the custom of casting lots among the chosen people in Old Testament times, led to that adage of wise men: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 33).

The custom of casting lots, which was outstanding in the preparatory Dispensation, is now cast into the shade. There is no trace of it in the New Testament after the Day of Pentecost; and there is no need for it, seeing that the will of God for our salvation is now complete, and that the Spirit of truth has been promised to guide us into all the truth. God's adopting of it, however, during the nonage of the Church, served a most important end. It revealed most impressively the unerring knowledge and sovereign power of the Most High. It may, indeed, sometimes still be lawfully, and with advantage, used, as, *e.g.*, in a matter of precedence, or when the reasons for and against seem equally balanced, or in certain cases of expediency. Such occasions may be safely left to the judgment of a sanctified common sense. But to resort, without Divine sanction, to the casting of lots for the

discovery of crime, or the selection of persons for important offices, or the regulation of our conduct in the serious affairs of life, would be foolish in the extreme. There may be little light in our own reason, but there is no light at all in the lot.

It was mere superstition which led these heathen sailors, when they were at their wits' end on the deck of the reeling ship, to cast lots that they might find out the guilty cause of the storm. They had no solid ground for believing, either that the storm was due to some guilty one on board, or that the lot would discover him. They blindly followed the superstitious beliefs of their age. But, as God purposed to convict Jonah, He not only permitted them to act out their beliefs, but guided the lot to a successful issue. We read: "So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."

When the unknown passenger was pointed out by the lot as the cause of the storm, the captain and his men eagerly surrounded the stranger, and sought to ascertain from his own lips that he was indeed the guilty party. They said unto him (v. 8): "Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?"

The action of the sailors after the casting of the

lot in the case of Jonah is similar to that of Joshua after the casting of the lot in the case of Achan. When the lot fell upon Achan as the one guilty of taking the accursed thing, Joshua, instead of at once inflicting the punishment, desired him to make confession. He said: "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me" (Josh. vii. 19). There was no dubiety in the mind of Joshua as to the accuracy of the lot; he speaks to Achan as one inwardly persuaded of his guilt; but he advises him to make open confession, that God might be glorified as the all-knowing and unerring over-ruler of the lot. There was, however, dubiety in the minds of the sailors. They were indeed inclined to accept the decision of the lot as just; but before inflicting the punishment they wished to be inwardly assured of the fact. And a certain measure of uncertainty could hardly fail to accompany the decision of the lot amongst the heathen nations.

But let us now consider the several questions which the sailors, in their eager curiosity to know the truth, put to Jonah. The first, which is the most pertinent and embodies the spirit of the rest, is: "Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us." *For whose cause?* is literally,

For what, to whom? They thought of Jonah as guilty of some crime, and they desired to know what it was, and the person against whom it was committed. The next question is, *What is thine occupation?* The main reason which led them to ask, was probably the idea that his calling might be offensive to the gods, and that they had raised the storm against him, either for what he had already done in it, or for what he had set out on this voyage to do. Demetrius, the silversmith, raised a furious storm in the city of Ephesus against Paul, because he had made it his business to turn men away from the service of the gods, thus threatening to destroy the trade in silver shrines and reverence for the great temple of Diana (Acts xix. 24-28). These heathen sailors too might readily imagine that the gods in wrath had raised the storm, because the unknown passenger was following a similar occupation. The next question is: *And whence comest thou?* The place from which he had come might cast some light on his crime. Guilty fugitives dislike to be questioned as to their past movements. The next is: *What is thy country?* It might be that his country had grievously offended the gods, and that they were avenging themselves upon him for trying to escape from their displeasure. Last of all, *And of what people art thou?*

Much depends on the people to whom one belongs. Families and tribes for some notorious crime are sometimes devoted to a curse. The family of Canaan, *e.g.*, was doomed to servitude because of the shameful impiety of their father Ham, and the tribe of Amalek was doomed to extermination because they cruelly and maliciously sought to cut off the newly emancipated children of Israel (Gen. ix. 25; Ex. xvii. 14). And as a Divine curse sometimes rested on a people, the heathen sailors probably thought that, if they knew the family or tribal connection of Jonah, they might get the explanation of the storm.

These questions, which were eagerly put to Jonah amid the roar of the tempest and the lurching of the ship, one by one sailor and another by another sailor, each from his own point of view, were all meant to bring the hidden guilt to light; and the fact that the sailors conducted their examination in such trying circumstances, before acting on the decision of the lot, shows that they were men in whom the sense of justice was very strong. But, though jerked out without concert and at random, these questions were admirably fitted to reveal the greatness of Jonah's guilt, and pierce him to the heart. To the question, *For whose cause is this evil come upon us?* the answer would at once rise in the

mind of Jonah, For my wilful disobedience of the Divine command. To the question, *What is thine occupation?* the only answer possible was, The high and honourable position of being a prophet of the Lord. To the question, *Whence comest thou?* the answer would be, From standing in the presence of the Lord. By the question, *What is thy country?* Jonah would be made to remember that it was the goodly land of Canaan which the Lord had given to the children of Israel, and in which he dwelt between the cherubim above the mercy seat in the Temple at Jerusalem. And to the question, *Of what people art thou?* he could only truly reply, The people whom God had chosen and redeemed, and specially guarded and blessed. After the longest and most careful consideration, the sailors could not have put to Jonah questions more pointed and searching, and better adapted to enlighten his conscience and stir the emotions of his heart.

As the sailors on the lurching ship eagerly waited for a satisfactory answer to their rapid questionings, Jonah calmly replied, v. 9, "I am an Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." He also told them, as we learn from the 10th verse, that he had fled from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah was silent before the casting of the lots and

the questioning of the sailors. He had probably prayed to his God, as the captain had enjoined; but as the storm continued to rage with unabated fury and threatened to engulf the ship, and as the sailors were busy in making preparations for the casting of the lot, Jonah, if not inwardly sure, must have had a strong foreboding that he was the man. His conscience, quickened if not awakened by the tempest, told him that he was guilty of a heinous sin in disobeying the word of the Lord. But he was not as yet ready to make an open confession of his guilt. Shame perhaps, and perhaps the hope that another on board might be the guilty one, kept his lips closed. The true Jonah had not as yet appeared. But when the lot fell upon him, and the sailors flocked round him and put to him such probing questions, he not only keenly felt that he was the guilty cause of the storm, but had the noble candour and courage to acknowledge it. There is a wonderful calmness as well as an openness about his reply.

First of all, he says, *I am an Hebrew*. The name Hebrew in the Old Testament is given for the first time to Abraham in connection with the capture of Lot in the raid of the four eastern kings. The sacred historian says, "And there came one that had escaped and told Abram the Hebrew" (Gen.

xiv. 13). There are two likely explanations of the origin of the name. One is to derive it from Eber, one of the ancestors of Abraham, so that Hebrew would be equivalent to a son of Eber. The other is to derive it from a word which means *to pass over*, or, *a land on the other side*, so that Hebrew, as applied to Abraham, would mean one who had crossed or come from the other side of the Euphrates. The second, which is more common, seems much the more probable. But, according to either view, the name Hebrew would naturally extend, and probably extended originally, to others than the chosen people.

Hebrew, however, at a very early period seems to have been confined to the chosen people; and one thing which may have powerfully tended to bring it about is, the prominence which Abraham and the other ancestors of Israel gave to the fact that they were strangers and sojourners in the land of Caanan. Emigrants originally, they continued to be emigrants in spirit. We find Abraham at the death of Sarah, when he had lived in Canaan for more than fifty years, say to the sons of Heth, "I am a stranger and sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Gen. xxiii. 4). And his son Isaac and his son Jacob lived in the

same spirit. In the epistle to the Hebrews we read, "By faith Abraham became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi. 9, 10). And this emigrant attitude would naturally lead to the confirmation of the name Hebrew. As the descendants of Abraham and of Isaac, other than the chosen seed, became naturalised in their several countries, the name Hebrew, which pointed them out as strangers or emigrants, would very speedily fall away from them. And it is a memorable fact, due perhaps to their wonderful providential training, that the chosen people carried with them the spirit of *Hebrews* throughout their history. In his thanksgiving prayer for the liberality of the people in giving for the erection of the temple, David, when the nation was firmly established in the land, used those striking words, "We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding (1 Chron. xxix. 15).

Jonah speaking to the Gentile sailors naturally describes himself as an Hebrew, as this was the name by which the Israelites were known to

foreigners. "It is used in the Old Testament," observes Dr Pusey, "only when they are spoken of by foreigners, or speak of themselves to foreigners, or when the sacred writers mention them in contrast with foreigners."

After telling them that he was an Hebrew, Jonah then says, "And I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." Fearing the Lord here does not mean, either that he was afraid of Him because he had sinned, or that he claimed to be a righteous or innocent person, but simply, as it so often does in Scripture, that he was a worshipper of the God of the Hebrews. The description which he gives of Israel's God is remarkably full and appropriate. He calls Him, first of all, *the Lord*, or Jehovah, the self-existent and immoveable One, the only One who has immortality. The gods of the heathens are the creation of men's imagination or the workmanship of men's hands; but Jehovah is the uncreated and the ever-living One, the Source of all being and life.

Then he speaks of Him as *the God of Heaven*. This title, though it may suggest that God is the Creator of the heavens, and the Object of worship to the heavenly hosts, seems intended to express His greatness and universal sovereignty. Our God is in the heavens, high and highly-exalted; and His

kingdom ruleth over all. It is the title which Cyrus uses in his proclamations regarding the building of the temple at Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxxvi. 23; Ezra i. 2). His successors in the Medo-Persian Empire, Darius and Artaxerxes, used it in their decree (Ezra vi. 9, 10; vii. 12, 21, 23). Daniel in Babylon used it more than once in connection with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii. 18, 19, 37, 44). It occurs twice in the reply of the returned exiles to the governor on this side of the Euphrates (Ezra v. 11, 12), and four times in the book of Nehemiah (Neh. i. 4, 5; ii. 4, 20). We meet with it also in the closing verse of the 136th Psalm, which was probably composed for the worship of the second Temple: "O give thanks unto the God of heaven; for his mercy endureth for ever."

The frequency with which the title is used in post-exilic times is advanced by some as an evidence of the late date of the book of Jonah. Two things seem to show that this argument is without weight. One is that Jonah, in being sent to Nineveh, and in sailing with and speaking to heathen sailors, was *in similar circumstances to those in post-exilic times.* This very position led him to think of the universal sovereignty of God. And the other is, that *the title was in use long before.* We find it twice in the life of Abraham when he was sending Eliezer to Padan-

aram to get a wife for his son Isaac (Gen. xxiv. 3, 7); and Jehoshaphat, who reigned in Judah before the time of Jonah, virtually uses the title, when he says in his prayer, "O Lord, the God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and art not thou ruler over all the nations?" (2 Chron. xx. 6). Professor George Smith, who is an advocate for the late date of the book, and who professes to give in his commentary a complete list of the passages in which the expression occurs, strangely overlooks and omits them both.

After speaking of his God as "the Lord, the God of heaven," Jonah very appropriately adds, "which hath made the sea and the dry land." The sea is mentioned first, because it was first in his thoughts. It was then prominently before him through the fury of the storm, so much in his thoughts as almost to exclude everything else. And he refers to God as the Maker of the sea and the dry land, to show that He had the sovereign right and power to raise the storm which threatened to engulf them. He also told them that he had disobeyed the command of this Sovereign and Almighty One, that, instead of going to Nineveh to cry against it for its wickedness, according to the word of the Lord, he had fled from His Presence, and set out in the ship for Tarshish.

When the sailors heard these things from the lips of Jonah, "they were exceedingly afraid" (they

feared with a great fear), and said unto him, "What is this that thou hast done?" Formerly, we are told, they were afraid of the storm; but now they were exceedingly afraid, because Jonah had led them to connect the storm with the wrath of the Almighty Maker of the sea and the dry land. They now for the first time felt that God was great, and greatly to be feared; and as they thought of Jonah's disobedience they were filled with wonder and amazement. The heathen sailors were shocked at the disobedience of the prophet. And all disobedience is fitted to excite our wonder and amazement. We might well say to others and to onrselves, when sin is committed, and especially when one persists in a course of disobedience, "What is this that thou hast done?" The reason why sin is often so lightly treated is because we fail to realise the infinite greatness and almighty power of God. May the prayer of Moses in the grand old 90th Psalm be ours, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger, and Thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto Thee? So teach us to number our days, that we may get us an heart of wisdom."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CASTING OUT.

(Chap. I. 11-16.)

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with thy shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths, with bubbling groan—
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

Byron.

THE decision of the lot and the confession of Jonah made it clear to the heathen sailors that the passenger, whom they had taken on board at Joppa, was the guilty cause of the storm. Though the God of heaven, who had made the sea and the dry land, had commanded him to go to Nineveh, he had fled and sought to escape from the presence of

the Lord. Such disobedience led them to say in wonder and amazement, "What is this that thou hast done?" But, although convinced that Jonah was the guilty one, they did not at once lay hold of him and cast him out into the sea, but said, "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" They delayed to make Jonah judge in his own case, while "the sea grew more and more tempestuous." Had the prophet been one of themselves, it is almost certain that they would have at once consigned him to the deep.

Two things may account for their extraordinary caution—one, that Jonah was a prophet of the God of heaven, and the other, the noble candour of his confession. The heathen sailors were profoundly impressed by the sovereign greatness and power of the God of heaven. When Jonah told them of Him, they feared exceedingly; they had an evidence of His might in the resistless fury of the storm; and as Jonah was one of His prophets, *they naturally dreaded to excite His wrath by punishing one of His servants.* They recognised the wisdom of acting on such a saying as this: "Touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm" (Ps. cv. 15). They were also *restrained by a profound respect for Jonah himself.* The noble candour of his confession could hardly fail to impress them most favourably.

He had frankly told them not only who he was, but the sin of which he had been guilty against the God of heaven. He did not in any way seek to tone down the gravity of his offence, although death was staring him in the face. The respect which such heroic candour would inspire in the brave seamen, was doubtless one of the things which led them not only to delay the punishing of Jonah, but to ask his advice. Being a prophet of the God of heaven, he might be able to show them some other way of dealing with him than that of casting him out into the raging sea. And so with humble reverence they eagerly say to him, amid the roar of the storm and the lurching of the ship: "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?"

In their eagerness not to do wrong, the sailors put Jonah in a trying position, by making him the judge in his own case. He was under great temptation to give a biassed judgment in his own favour. The love of life in the presence of death is strong. There is much truth in the words of Satan, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job ii. 4). But, instead of taking advantage of their generosity to escape from his deserved death, he said to them with a quiet courage and decision: "Take me up, and cast me

forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." None but a brave man could have said to the sailors with the calmness of a judge: "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." He saw the sea with its raging billows tossing and tumbling about the ship, and the sight was fitted to make one shrink with terror at the thought of going down into its cold and gloomy depths; but the awfulness of the death neither unmanned him nor deflected by a hair's breadth the inner pointing of duty. In the circumstances none could have acted more nobly and courageously.

His courage, too, is seen *in refraining from doing anything to hasten his own end.* Many in trouble, like Saul the son of Kish, seek to escape from it by laying violent hands upon themselves, and thus wilfully shorten their own days; but Jonah humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, and patiently awaited His will. It was indeed humiliating that a prophet of the Lord should be treated as a criminal unfit to live by a company of the uncircumcised heathen; the shame of such a death has led many to commit suicide: but Jonah, instead of seeking to avoid it by taking away his own life, courageously calls upon the heathen sailors to carry out the sentence of Divine condemnation.

Two reasons led the prophet to give such an order to the sailors. One was the knowledge that he was the guilty cause of the storm, and the other the knowledge that the casting of him out into the sea would hush the storm into a calm.

(1.) *As to the first reason*, Jonah says: "I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Several things doubtless helped to produce this knowledge. Jonah for one thing was conscious of having sinned in disobeying the word of the Lord and fleeing unto Tarshish. For another thing, he knew that God in His providence often punishes the sins of men, and especially those of His own people. The past history of the race and of the Israelitish people is full of striking illustrations. The very heathen recognised that there was a Nemesis in human affairs. And the guilty, like Joseph's brethren in Egypt when they were treated as spies, are prone to connect adverse providences with their sins. The likelihood is that, when Jonah was awakened from his deep sleep and saw the terrible storm, he looked upon this great storm as a punishment for his rebellious flight. Then there was the decision of the lot, which pointed him out as the guilty party. But, while all the facts in the prophet's experience contributed to the knowledge,

the inner light of the Spirit shining upon them was needful to give him certainty. Without the illumination of the Spirit he might have said, "I am persuaded or I am convinced that I am the guilty one;" but he could hardly have said, "I *know* that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."

(2.) *As to the second reason*, Jonah says: "So shall the sea be calm unto you." These words, it seems to me, imply a supernatural illumination. Had Jonah been left to himself he could only have expressed the hope that the storm would be hushed when he was cast into the sea. More than this would have been unwarrantable presumption. No sane man would ever dream of saying more. But, as the prophet plainly told them that the storm would cease when the guilty one was punished, the event must have been revealed to him from above. It was this certain knowledge that led Jonah to say to them in answer to their question, "Take me up and cast me into the sea."

But we read (v. 13): "Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they could not; for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them." The action of the sailors, after getting the advice of Jonah, is in the

highest degree praiseworthy. Several reasons might easily have induced them at once to sacrifice Jonah. There was *the threatening fury of the storm.* The ship amid the drivings of the wind and the dashing of the waves was in danger every moment of going down with all on board into the depths of the sea. As they were in great peril, the fear of death would make them try every feasible way of escape. Drowning men are ready to catch at a straw. Then there was *the hope of a cessation of the storm.* The prophet of the God of heaven had told them that on his being thrown overboard the sea would be calm ; and the desire for rest and safety on the part of the tempest-tossed must be peculiarly strong. The fear of death on the one hand and the hope of life on the other would powerfully influence them to act as Jonah desired. Besides, there was *the fact that it was Jonah's own advice.* But, notwithstanding these weighty considerations, they braved the dangers of the storm, and sought, by "digging" the sea with their oars, to bring the prophet safe to land. It is a beautiful illustration of noble disinterestedness and self-sacrifice.

The magnanimity of the sailors in seeking to rescue Jonah from a watery grave says much for the nobleness of Jonah himself. The prophet of Gath-hepher may have been a great and honoured

man in the land of Israel, but to the sailors he was a total stranger, and only a passenger who had brought much damage, as well as imminent danger, to themselves and the ship. Such an one might have been regarded with hatred and suspicion; but the eminent candour of his confession and the magnanimous fearlessness of his advice transformed their natural aversion into the most self-sacrificing devotion. There must have been something peculiarly attractive and inspiring in the personality of Jonah to bring about such a remarkable change. The magnanimity of the sailors must have been a reflection of the magnanimity of Jonah. "As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19).

But the efforts of these kind-hearted sailors were in vain. In struggling with the storm they were like a child contending with a giant. Though their aim was in the highest degree praiseworthy, they were doomed to failure. They could make no headway against the growing fury of the storm. They deserved, but could not command success. And such an experience is not uncommon in human life. The opposing forces are sometimes too strong for the best of men in the best of causes; and no man or body of men can succeed in anything in opposition to the will of God. And

in this case it was God's will that the sailors should fail. The Most High doubtless regarded the generous efforts of the sailors with pleasure, and would reward them accordingly; but as it was His will that Jonah should be punished for his flight and cast into the sea, He made it impossible for them to row the ship to land by increasing the violence of the storm. The favouring providence of God is always needful for success. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. cxxvii. 1). It was the observation of such experiences as this of the sailors that led the wise Preacher to say: "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to the men of understanding, nor yet favour to the men of skill: but time and chance happeneth to them all" (Eccl. ix. 11).

The sailors, as they were tugging with desperation at the oars, soon began to see that they were spending their strength for nought and in vain, and that they were shut up to cast out Jonah into the sea. They must either carry out the sentence or go down with him into the deep. The unerring way in which God brings His fugitive prophet to punishment is very striking. And as with Jonah so

with all sinners. Go where they may and do what they may, no sinner can escape out of the hands of God, but must in the course of time receive the due reward of his deeds. "Though hand join in hand, the evil man shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xi. 21).

Before the sailors, surely against their will, cast out Jonah into the sea, they prayed. The sacred historian says, verse 14, "Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee."

At the beginning of the storm the sailors cried every one to his god; but now *they cried unto the Lord*, or Jehovah. This great change under God was due to the teaching and noble character of Jonah and the wonderful impressiveness of the storm. They may have heard before of the God of the Hebrews, but they thought of Him as only one of the many gods amongst the nations. It was only when Jonah said to them with calm conviction and reverent awe, "I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land," and told them that he had been guilty of disobeying his word, and seeking to flee from His Presence, that they came amid the fury of the

storm to realise the sovereign greatness and might of the Lord. They began to fear Him with a great fear. Their faith was still further confirmed when Jonah said to them in heroic confidence: "Take me up and cast me forth into the sea: so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." This calm and confident faith, enforced by his lofty candour and courage, and the overmastering might of the storm, were the means which God employed in turning them from idols to Himself. Great changes in favourable circumstances may be wrought in a very short time.

The prayer which the baffled sailors offered unto the Lord was *intensely earnest*. They cried: "We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee." They had been intensely earnest in their efforts to rescue Jonah from a grave in the sea; and now that they could not avert his doom, they were intensely earnest in their prayer that death might not be inflicted on them for the involuntary act. They cry: "Let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood." The two clauses of the prayer, though they mean substantially the same thing, present the idea of deliverance from death under two different aspects. In the first, "Let us not perish for

this man's life," it is deliverance from the hand of man, while in the second, "and lay not upon us innocent blood," it is deliverance from the hand of God Himself.

The sailors in the first clause seem to have thought of the friends and relatives of Jonah, who might, when they heard of their casting him into the sea, look upon them as murderers and execute vengeance upon them. They seem not only to have felt the sacredness of life, but to have known the saying, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. ix. 6). As they might very easily be regarded as the murderers of Jonah by his relatives and friends, they naturally dread their vengeance, and so pray, "Let us not perish for this man's life." In the second clause they seek to avert the vengeance of God Himself. When they speak of *innocent blood*, they do not mean to imply that Jonah had done no wrong for which he deserved to die, inasmuch as they had already shown that they believed otherwise. When Jonah told them that he had fled from the presence of the Lord, they exclaimed in horror and amazement: "What is this that thou hast done?" But as regards themselves, the fugitive prophet was innocent. He had in every way acted towards them as an honourable

man. He had paid his fare, joined with them in prayer for the common safety, made a candid confession when the lot had fallen upon him, and expressed his readiness to die for the safety of the ship and all on board. As Jonah, who was a prophet of the Lord, was innocent in relation to them, they were afraid that the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, might be angry with them for casting His servant into the sea. Hence they cried, "And lay not upon us innocent blood."

To enforce their prayer they urged *the reason:* "For Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased Thee." The sailors had good ground for ascribing what they were about to do to the God of heaven. By the lot He had pointed out Jonah as the guilty cause of the storm. The prophet had not only confessed that he was the culprit, but had advised them to cast him out as the one means of allaying the storm; and He had frustrated all their efforts to save Jonah by causing the sea to be more and more tempestuous. The God of providence, by thus shutting up every way of escape but one, virtually said to them, "This is the way; walk ye in it." And as He had willed them to do what they would fain have avoided, they urged this as a reason for acquittal. And having

prayed, "they took up Jonah and cast him into the sea."

There is something striking in *the tender humanity of the heathen sailors, who had only ceased to be idolaters and become fearers of God during the storm.* They risked their lives to save Jonah, and, when this was found to be impossible, they earnestly besought the Lord not to lay his death to their account. They manifested a profound regard for the life of a guilty stranger. Had these sailors not become fearers of God, the likelihood is that, after the lot had fallen upon Jonah and they had found him guilty, they would at once without hesitation or compunction have cast him into the sea. It is a fact that idolatry everywhere hardens the hearts of men, and makes their homes "the habitations of horrid cruelty." There is a tone of severity in the captain when he shouted in the ears of Jonah, as he lay in the cabin, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." There is a tone of judicial curiosity in the questions of the sailors, "Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?" They are the questions of men bent upon getting evidence for the ratification of

the lot. But in neither the captain nor his men is there the gleam of a tender and loving heart. They are as yet living in the dark and cold night of spiritual ignorance. But when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God dawns upon them, through the words of Jonah, and they begin to fear the Lord, their hearts towards Jonah are also changed. From being ready to doom him to destruction they now say, "What shall we do unto thee that the sea may be calm unto us?" And although Jonah said that the thing for them to do was to cast him overboard, they would not, but took to the oars and rowed with all their might to get them back to the land. The risking of their lives for a guilty stranger is a beautiful illustration of self-sacrificing love. And when the growing violence of the storm made their efforts hopeless, they offered up, before they cast Jonah into the sea, an earnest prayer which reveals a profound regard for the sacredness of human life. The case of these sailors shows that the fear of God is the friend and not the foe of humanity, the creator and not the destroyer, the deepener and purifier, and not the weakener and debaser, of human love. "Beloved," says John, "let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that

loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John iv. 7, 8).

It was no doubt with much sorrow and reluctance that the sailors lifted up Jonah and heaved him into the sea; and as they saw him disappear amid the angry waves, they probably wept, like the elders of Ephesus at the departure of Paul, that they should behold his face no more. Their sorrow, however, was almost immediately mingled with joy, for no sooner had Jonah been thrown overboard than "the sea ceased from her raging." The howling winds became silent, and the threatening billows settled down into a calm and level sea. The history of the storm seems to have been similar to what took place on two occasions on the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee in the days of our Lord. On the first occasion Jesus was asleep on the cushion in the stern; and when the disciples in terror came and awoke him, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" He arose and said to the storm "Peace, be still!" and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm (Mark iv. 37-39). On the second occasion, when the disciples were battling with the storm in the midst of the Galilean lake, Jesus came to them walking on the sea; and when they saw Him, they were afraid, for they imagined Him to be a spirit; but He said to them, "Be of good

cheer; it is I; be not afraid." And as soon as He entered into the ship the wind ceased. The sacred poet had very probably the experience of the heathen sailors in the storm on the Mediterranean Sea in view, when he wrote the 107th Psalm. His description of God's power and goodness to men in a storm looks like a picture of their experience:—

"They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord,
And His wonders in the deep.
For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.
They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths:
Their soul melteth away because of trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.
Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,
And He bringeth them out of their distresses.
He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
Then are they glad because they be quiet;
So He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.
Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness,
And for his wonderful works to the children of men!"
—(Ps. cvii. 23-31.)

After the hushing of the storm, we read, v. 16,

"Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows." The God of heaven was pacified when the guilty one was punished. Because of Jonah's sin He had raised the storm; but when Jonah was cast out into the sea, He hushed the storm into a calm. Both facts made the sailors fear the Lord exceedingly. They feared exceedingly, not only when the storm was allayed, but when Jonah told them that the storm was due to the wrath of the God of heaven. In the one case they feared the Lord and His wrath, and in the other they feared the Lord and His goodness (Hos. iii. 5). The one fear was akin to slavish dread, while the other fear was akin to reverential awe. Now this new fear showed itself in two remarkable ways. First of all, *they offered sacrifices unto the Lord.* The word for sacrifice implies that it was an animal which they offered. It was opposed to a bloodless offering on the one hand and to a burnt offering on the other. As the ship was one of the largest afloat, they would naturally have animals on board; and so they take one of them, it might be a goat or a sheep, and offer it in token of their gratitude and reverence, consuming one portion of the animal by fire and feasting on the remainder. They worshipped the Lord in the best way they knew. Then, in addition to

the sacrifice, the true meaning of which they probably but dimly understood, *they made vows*. They solemnly bound themselves not only to worship the Lord for the time to come, but perhaps also to do certain things for His honour and praise.

There is nothing known regarding the future of these eminently noble and praiseworthy seamen. Out of the depths of obscurity they come for a little into the clear light of history, and then sink into the depths of obscurity again. Their appearance on the page of history reminds one of Melchisedek, of whom we get only one solitary glimpse. It is not unlikely that they cruised back to Joppa, or Tyre, or some other seaport on the western coast, to get refitted for their long journey to Tarshish. The terrible storm which they had encountered could hardly fail to have damaged the ship and to make it unsafe to go on as they were ; and perhaps, as they were getting ready for the voyage, they had the happiness of meeting again with Jonah, not only to tell him what had taken place and what they had done after casting him into the sea, but to hear from his lips of his own wonderful experience in the deep. There seems to be no doubt that, either then or at some later period, the sailors and Jonah met one another and talked of their singular

experience. At all events, this single passage in the lives of these unknown sailors has told for good on the lives of multitudes in the succeeding generations, and will be a power for good as long as the world lasts.

CHAPTER VII.

JONAH IN THE GREAT FISH.

(Chap. I. 17, and II. 10.)

"Go not far from me, O my strength,
Whom all my times obey:
Take from me anything Thou wilt,
But go not Thou away—
And let the storm that does Thy work
Deal with me as it may.

"Thy love has many a lighted path
No outward eye can trace,
And my heart sees Thee in the deep,
With darkness on its face,
And communes with Thee 'mid the storm
As in a sacred place.

"O Comforter of God's redeemed,
Whom the world does not see,
What hand should pluck me from the flood
That casts my soul on Thee?
Who would not suffer pain like mine
To be consoled like me?"

—*A. L. Waring.*

THE sailors as a last resort had cast out Jonah into the wild and raging sea, and with regret had seen him disappear beneath the tumbling billows. As immediately after the storm was hushed and the sea became calm, they probably, before they offered their sacrafice of thanksgiving, looked wistfully over the surface of the water to find some trace of their former fellow-passenger and companion in trouble. But, as they could observe nothing, they would naturally conclude that Jonah must have perished. Sorrow, therefore, for his loss would temper the joy of thanksgiving for their escape. The gratitude of their piety would be tinged by the pity of their humanity.

But Jonah, to all appearance dead, was in reality alive in the heart of the great deep. We read (v. 17), "And the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

The narrative only informs us that the fish which swallowed Jonah was *a great fish.* Such an indefinite expression might be expected from the Hebrews, who were very ignorant of the sea and its inhabitants. Its Greek equivalent, *Cetos*, which is translated *whale* in the New Testament, was used in the same indefinite sense, and embraced other great fishes and sea-monsters besides the

whale. It is therefore reasonable to enquire as to what kind of great fish it was which swallowed Jonah. There are two serious objections to the opinion, once so universally prevalent, that it was a whale. The one is that this great fish is not common in the Mediterranean sea, and the other that its throat is too narrow to swallow a man. The narrowness of its throat suggests not only physical impossibility, but also that the act of swallowing Jonah would be contrary to its natural habits. God indeed could have enlarged the throat of a whale and overcome its natural instincts; but we have no right to believe that He did, unless we are constrained by the evidence to believe that it was a whale. The evidence, however, instead of pointing to the whale, seems unmistakably to point to *the shark*. This great fish, the white shark or Canis carcharias, is common in the Mediterranean sea, and has both the voracity and the capacity for swallowing a man. The bodies of human beings, whole horses, and other large animals, have often been found in its stomach.

The swallowing of Jonah by the great fish was not an accident, but *an act of Divine appointment*. "The Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." The God of heaven did not create a new fish for the purpose, but guided one of those vora-

cious great fishes, hungering for prey, to the spot where Jonah had been cast into the deep. He controls the movements, not only of the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, but of all living creatures in the great and wide sea.

Our Lord, when on earth, gave three striking illustrations of this marvellous supernatural power over the fish of the sea. The first was *in the beginning of his Galilean ministry.* After preaching from Peter's boat to the multitudes lining the shore in the neighbourhood of Capernaum, He said to Simon Peter: "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." This to the experienced fisherman seemed a fruitless piece of work. He replied: "Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at Thy word I will put down the nets." And when this was done, they enclosed such a multitude of fishes that their nets were like to break and their boats to sink. It was this most astonishing success which led Peter to fall down at Jesus' knees and say: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 1-9). The second was *in the latter half of his Galilean ministry some time after the Transfiguration.* The collector of the temple-tax at Capernaum had asked Peter: "Doth not your Master pay the half shekel?" and

Peter replied that He did. When the disciple, however, went into the house, Jesus, after showing him that as the Son of God He was free of the tax, said to Simon: "But, lest we cause them to stumble, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee" (Matt. xvii. 24-27). And the third was *after the Resurrection.* In the period of forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, the Risen Lord manifested Himself only at intervals to His disciples. It was probably in the second week after the Resurrection that the disciples returned to Galilee and seem to have resumed their former callings. One day some of them set out together under the leadership of Peter to fish on the Sea of Galilee; but they toiled all night and caught nothing. On returning, as they drew near to the shore in the grey dawn, Jesus standing on the beach said to them: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." On their doing so they enclosed no fewer than 153 great fishes (John xxi. 1-11). These illustrations, like that of the Lord preparing a great fish to swallow Jonah, reveal in a clear and impressive manner the sovereign, all-embracing dominion of

God over the fish of the sea. There is no sphere in the wide universe in which the creatures, living or dead, organic or inorganic, rational or irrational, are free from the Divine control. They all do whatsoever He has pleased.

The great fish, which the Lord had prepared, did not swallow Jonah as soon as he had been cast out of the ship. The representation of the great fish as being near the ship on the surface, ready with open mouth to receive him, is not according to fact. Instead of being at once swallowed, Jonah went down into the depths of the sea and suffered all the agony not only of a death by drowning, but of a soul cast out of the Divine Presence. He felt himself encompassed by the seaweed and sinking amongst the shelving rocks at the bottom. In his agony of soul he cried for deliverance unto the Lord, as he looked with his inner eyes towards the temple at Jerusalem. It was when he was amongst the rocks, where to all appearance he was buried for ever, that the great fish on its watch for prey swallowed the drowning prophet. This act, which in any other circumstances would have been death in a revolting form, became, through the wonderful power of God, the means of his preservation. And in that living grave Jonah remained unharmed for three days and three nights. Though virtually

dead, so far as appearances went, this holy one saw no corruption.

The expression, *three days and three nights*, is to be understood, not literally as three whole days and three whole nights, but as a Hebraism for three days in whole or in part. This is manifest from its use by Esther, who told her servants to go to Mordecai and say: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to law; and if I perish, I perish" (Esth. iv. 16). And then immediately after we are informed that, "it came to pass *on the third day* that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house" (Esth. v. 1). Between her words to Mordecai and her going in unto the king, the interval, instead of being three full days, included only a part of the first day, the whole of the second, and a part of the third. And in like manner Jonah was only a part of the third day in the belly of the great fish. He continued in that living and moving sepulchre—a new tomb, perhaps, in which no man was ever laid before—for the day in which he was cast out, the next whole day, and a part of the

third day, when he was vomited out upon the dry land.

The sacred historian says with regard to his restoration: "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (chap ii. 10). The great fish throughout this wonderful transaction was the chosen servant of the Most High. He had guided the chosen one to the spot where Jonah would sink, and had enabled it to swallow Jonah whole, and prevented the voracious creature from digesting him in its stomach. He had transformed its belly, the usual abode of death, into a safe shelter from the devouring waters. By His mysterious power the destroyer became the preserver of the prophet. Jonah in the sea-monster was as safe in the midst of the waters as ever passenger in a ship was on the surface of the sea. But on the third day, as the great fish had now served His purpose as a safe dwelling-place for Jonah, the Lord spoke to it, or communicated His will to it, in a way which the fish could understand, perhaps inspiring it with an impulse to get rid of the burden which had made it so uneasy. And under this impulse the great fish carried out the Divine will to the letter: it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. There is nothing said as to the place where Jonah was cast out; but it is not

unlikely that it was somewhere on the coast of Palestine, and perhaps in the neighbourhood of Joppa.

There is a strong tendency in our day, even on the part of some learned and enlightened Christians, to doubt or deny the historic truth of this wonderful experience of Jonah. This is perhaps mainly due to the progress of science and the growth of the scientific spirit. Both facts in themselves ought to be eagerly and gratefully welcomed, inasmuch as they tend to the elevation of man and to the unfolding of the Divine glory. But to make natural law the only sphere of the Divine action, is to be guilty not only of limiting the Most High, which is presumption, but of contradicting or leaving unexplained the undoubted facts of history, which is unscientific. There are several reasons which lead me to believe that Jonah's wonderful experience in the great fish is a historic fact.

(1) First of all, it is *recorded as a historic fact.* The book of Jonah relates to Jonah, the son of Amittai, the well-known prophet, perhaps the most distinguished prophet in Israel in the early years of the reign of Jeroboam II. It begins by telling us, in the usual historic manner, that this prophet received a Divine communication to go to Nineveh and cry against it, and that, instead of obeying, he

fled to Joppa to go to Tarshish from the Presence of the Lord. It then gives a circumstantial account of what Jonah did on board the ship, and of what befell him during the storm, until the sailors as a last resort took him up and cast him into the sea; and then it goes on to narrate that a great fish swallowed him, and after three days vomited him out upon the dry land. It begins historically and is carried on historically. No hint is given that one part is fact and another fiction; but the whole story is told with the sobriety and air of historic truth.

(2) Another reason is *his prayer in the belly of the great fish.* The sacred historian distinctly informs us of what Jonah thought in that strange abode. He says: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly" (ii. 1), and then in the following verses of the chapter he gives us the prayer itself. This prayer, which we shall consider in our next chapter, is tangible evidence of his experience there. It was not a residence without fruit. The noble poem which it called forth is an enduring monument of the historic fact. To resolve the narrative into fiction, denying that Jonah was ever in the belly of a great fish, and ascribing the poem to some other occasion or to creative genius, seems to be nothing less than to give the sacred writer the lie direct.

(3) Another reason is *the belief of the Jewish people in its historic truth.* The Jewish people, who received this book into their sacred canon, regarded it as a historical narrative (Josephus, Antiq. ix. 10, 2). As Jonah was one of their own prophets, they were more likely to know the facts of his life than the surrounding nations, or any of the learned men of recent times; and the fact that they looked upon the book as a narrative of actual facts is strong evidence in favour of its historic truth. The Jewish people may be sometimes "blind both to reason and scripture," and we are certainly neither bound nor inclined to accept everything which they believe; but with such a sacred writing before them as the book of Jonah—a part, as they believed, of the sure word of prophecy—it seems to me that they would have been blind indeed if they had looked upon the narrative as pure imagination. At all events their evidence, however we may value it, distinctly tells in favour of the historic nature of the book.

(4) Another reason is *the use which our Lord made of Jonah's wonderful experience.* When certain Scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus on one occasion, "Master, we would see a sign from Thee," He replied, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no

sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale (sea-monster or great fish); so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 38-40). On another occasion, when the Pharisees and Sadducees asked Him to show them a sign from heaven, He said to them amongst other things, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of Jonah" (Matt. xvi. 4). It is to the former of the occasions that Luke refers when he tells us that Jesus said to the multitudes gathering around Him: "This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation" (Luke xi. 29, 30).

Professor George Smith, who holds the parabolic view of the book of Jonah, is candid enough to say: "These words, of course, are compatible with the opinion that the book of Jonah is a record of real fact. The only question is, are they also compatible with the opinion that the book of Jonah is a parable?" The professor thinks that they are, and that our Lord only referred to the incident

about Jonah as an illustration, without concerning Himself as to whether it was real or imaginary. He says: "Christ is using an illustration: it surely matters not whether that illustration be drawn from the realm of fact or of poetry. Again and again in their discourses to the people do men use illustrations and enforcements drawn from the traditions of the past. Do we, even when the historical value of the traditions is *very* ambiguous, give a single thought to the question of the historical character? We never think of it. It is enough for us that the tradition is popularly accepted and familiar. And we cannot deny to our Lord what we claim for ourselves" ("The Twelve Prophets," vol. ii. p. 508). But it seems to me that the words of our Lord are *only* compatible with the opinion that the book of Jonah is a record of real fact.

It is no doubt true that our Lord uses the incident of Jonah being in the belly of the great fish as an illustration of His death and resurrection, and that for purely illustrative purposes it does not matter whether the incidents selected belong to history or imagination. But the professor has failed to observe that our Lord meant more than mere illustration. He pointed the Jews to the wonderful deliverance of Jonah from his three days' entombment *as a sign*. The Jews were

asking for a sign—not an illustration—some extraordinary manifestation of Divine power, as a proof of His Messiahship; and Jesus gave them a sign, the sign of the prophet Jonah, a sign in the past and not in the present. But if Jonah's entombment in the fish was not a fact but a fiction, not prose but poetry, then it could not be a sign either to the Ninevites in the past or to the Jews in the present. An imaginary illustration may be a striking proof of poetic genius, but it is not and cannot be *a sign*, an extraordinary manifestation of Divine power. The fact that the sign of Jonah was given to the Jews as a proof of His Messiahship, seems necessarily to imply two things, (1) that the miraculous deliverance of Jonah after three days from the belly of the fish was a real event, and (2) that it was a type or divinely appointed shadow of what was to occur in the history of our Lord. To deny either is virtually to make our Lord's words pointless. If one deny the reality of Jonah's wonderful deliverance, then it ceases to be a sign; and if one deny that it is a type of a similar occurrence in the life of our Lord, then it ceases to be a sign to the Jews in relation to Jesus. In pointing the Jews to the sign of Jonah as the only proof he would give them of His Messiahship, Jesus acted in the same way as He

did at the First Passover, when, in answer to the demand for a "sign," he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19).

Having stated the main grounds for believing in the historic truth of Jonah's entombment, I would conclude the chapter by pointing out some striking resemblances between the wonderful experience of Jonah and that of Jesus, which may help to strengthen our faith in its historic truth.

(1.) First of all, *the figurative death of Jonah bears a striking resemblance to the real death of Jesus.* In both it was *a death for sin.* Jonah had to die for his one sin of disobedience; but though Jesus did no sin Himself, He voluntarily took upon Him the sins of others and made them His own. He, like Jonah, was treated by God as a sinner. As Paul says, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21). In both it was *an accursed death.* Jonah was cast out as an accursed one into the sea. He was cast out not only by the sailors but also by God. "I said," says Jonah as he was sinking in the depth of the sea, "I am cast out from before Thine eyes" (chap. ii. 4). And so it was with Jesus. He was cast out both by man and by God. He was forcibly ejected from the city and suffered without the gate; and as he was sinking in the dark and cold waters of death he cried under a

sense of soul desertion, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). And in both it was *a death necessary for the salvation of others.* When the sailors said to Jonah, "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? the prophet calmly replied, "Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you, for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." The sailors, however, took to the oars and did their utmost to save the life of Jonah; but the God of providence made it clear to them that Jonah must be punished if they were to escape. It was only when they had cast out Jonah that the sea ceased from her raging. And the death of Jesus was equally necessary for our salvation. At the beginning of His public ministry Jesus said to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life" (John iii. 14, 15). He had indeed a strong aversion to die the death of a sinner; it was so revolting to His sensitive humanity. In the garden of Gethsemane He cried with strong crying and tears, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). But, as it was not possible if we were to

be saved, He calmly went forward to meet it. When Peter would fain have rescued Him from Judas, Jesus dissuaded him saying, "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11). There was no other way in which the storm of the Divine wrath could be hushed for us into a calm; and as He has died for us, so we are now "justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus" (Rom. v. 1).

(2.) Again, *the figurative entombment of Jonah bears a striking resemblance to the real entombment of Jesus.* When Jonah was cast out into the raging sea and sank in its gloomy depths, he was as good as dead. Left to himself, he must inevitably have perished; but, though in the region of death, God preserved him alive. His death, like the eternity of Melchisedek, was only seeming and emblematic. His burial in the sea resembles that of Jesus in the earth in two respects. First of all, Jonah, like Jesus, was *buried in a definite spot.* The body of Jonah was not allowed to be driven hither and thither by the shifting currents of the sea, but safely deposited in the belly of a great fish. His tomb, though moveable in itself, was for him both definite and fixed. And in like manner the body of Jesus, instead of being left to the mercy of the shifting caprices of men, was safely deposited in the rock-hewn

tomb of Joseph. Both tombs, too, were inexorably closed and guarded against human interference. Again, Jonah, like Jesus, *remained in the tomb for three days.* The period of three days in both cases was not accidental but determined by God. The narrative makes this manifest with regard to Jonah. It was God who prepared the fish to swallow Jonah, and who spoke to it to vomit him out upon the dry land. The precise period was therefore due to the will of God. And the Gospels make it equally manifest with regard to Jesus. One end, which God had in view in making the period of Jonah's entombment three days, was perhaps to make the fact of his wonderful preservation clear to all, and especially to the Ninevites, to whom Jonah was afterwards sent. Had the period been less, the hand of God in it would have been less clearly seen, and there would have been more scope for the idea that the result was due to natural causes. But the main end, I have no doubt, was to shadow forth the future entombment of His own Son. The likeness between the two is not accidental but designed. The one entombment was a prophetic adumbration of the other. Thus it was that Jesus said to the Jews, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 40).

(3.) Again, *the figurative resurrection of Jonah bears a striking resemblance to the real resurrection of Jesus.* Both resurrections were the result of Divine power. Though alive in the belly of the fish, Jonah was virtually dead. Had it not been for the direct action of God, Jonah could not have lived in the belly of the fish, nor would the fish have ever vomited him out upon the dry land. The instincts of the voracious creature would have retained and devoured him. Escape from the belly of the fish was as hopeless as escape from the dominion of the grave. But God in the exercise of His omnipotent power compelled the sea monster to yield up its occupant and restore him to the land. And as in the case of Jonah so in the case of Jesus. By Divine appointment He was swallowed by the all-devouring monster Death, and retained in its capacious belly; and His disciples, when they saw it, imagined that now all was over and mournfully said, "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21). But, on the third day, as in the case of Jonah, God compelled the voracious monster to restore the dead one to the land of life. The fact that Jonah was in so many ways so strikingly conformed to Jesus imparts a peculiar interest and importance to this Old Testament prophet.

CHAPTER VIII.

JONAH'S PRAYER.

(Chap. II. 1-9.)

THEN Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. And he said :—

" I called by reason of my affliction unto the Lord,
And He answered me :
Out of the belly of hell cried I,
And Thou heardest my voice.
For Thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas,
And the flood was round about me ;
All Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me.
And I said, I am cast out from before Thine eyes ;
Yet I will look again towards Thy holy Temple.
The waters compassed me about, even to the soul ;
The deep was round about me ;
The weeds were wrapped about my head.
I went down to the bottom of the mountains ;
The earth with her bars closed upon me for ever ;
Yet hast Thou brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God.
When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord ;
And my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy Temple.

They that regard lying vanities
Forsake their own mercy.
But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving :
I will pay that which I have vowed.
Salvation is of the Lord."—*Revised Version*.

This psalm or ode is represented as the prayer of Jonah in the belly of the great fish. The words of the first verse seem to imply not only that Jonah was the author of the psalm, but also that he composed it in his strange abode. Mental composition, though not general, is far from being rare. It was the custom of the poet Wordsworth to make his verses in the open air, and then to write them out at home on his return. Public speakers have been known to make speeches or sermons in their mind, retain them in their memory, and deliver them as they were thought out, without putting pen to paper ; and as the psalm of Jonah consists of only eight small verses, and relates to recent thrilling incidents in his own experience, the idea of its mental composition in the belly of the fish does not seem to be a very extraordinary feat. Many, indeed, have concluded from the discomfort of his position that he must have composed it after his restoration to the land. Luther voices this opinion when he writes : " Not that he uttered just these words with his mouth, and placed them in such

order, for he was not in so happy a state as to compose so fine a hymn ; but it is therein shown how he felt, what thoughts were in his heart, while he was engaged in the hard struggle with death." The objection, however, seems to have no weight. It overlooks the power which a great joy has of making one indifferent to outward circumstances. The joy of thought has made the student forgetful of the discomforts of a garret ; the joy of victory has made the soldier, lying bleeding on the field of battle, forgetful of his wounds and heart-rending surroundings ; and the joy of deliverance from a watery grave might well have made the prophet forgetful of the discomforts of his asylum, and think only of giving expression to the gratitude of his heart. It is certainly more pleasant and charitable to think of Jonah in the belly of the fish spending his time in composing a hymn of praise than in moping over the unpleasantness of his abode.

It is noteworthy that the psalm, which is spoken of as a prayer, *has in it no petition.* It refers, indeed, to what Jonah cried for when he was in the depths of the sea ; but it records no petition made by him when he was in the belly of the great fish. From beginning to end it is a hymn of praise, and resembles the prayer of Hannah, which is also a song of thanksgiving without any petition (1 Sam.

ii. 1-10); but in both hymns there was probably a current of supplication. Hannah, while gratefully extolling the Lord, who had given her a son, might at the same time inwardly desire that His power might continue to be manifested; there would be the silent breathing of the petition, To Him be the glory and the power; and Jonah, while extolling the Lord for his deliverance from drowning, probably breathed the silent prayer that the Lord would perfect that which concerned him.

Another feature of the hymn is, that *it contains many expressions found with more or less exactness in the Psalms.* It seems full of echoes or reminiscences of the Psalter; and yet, while there is much that is old, there is not a little that is new. Phrases occur in it which are not found elsewhere, such as "The weeds were wrapped about my head," "I went down to the bottom (cutting-off) of the mountains," and "The earth with her bars closed upon me for ever." The hymn is not a literary mosaic but a living organic whole. It resembles a person who, while having features akin to those in ancestors and relatives, is at the same time a living, distinctive individuality. As the mind of Jonah seems thus to have been saturated and coloured by the songs of Zion, he may be fitly held up as a model of pious meditation. One calls the

hymn *præstantissimum exemplum psalterii recti applicati.*

But, while frankly acknowledging the many striking resemblances between the hymn of Jonah and the Psalms, and that these resemblances might be due to Jonah's familiarity with the Psalter, *one has no right to conclude that several of them are unmistakable repetitions of the Psalms.* One of the alleged unmistakable repetitions is the saying, "All Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me," which is exactly the same as that found in the 7th verse of the 42nd Psalm. Had the date of this psalm, which has been commonly assigned to the time of David, not been disputed, the strong assertion might have been left unnoticed; but, as it has been assigned by some to the period of the Exile, the assertion becomes more serious, inasmuch as the late date of the psalm involves the late date of the hymn. Suppose, then, that the 42nd Psalm was composed at the Exile, what ground is there for asserting that the saying, "All Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me," in the hymn of Jonah, is an unmistakable repetition of the same words in the psalm? Would it not be equally reasonable to affirm that the saying in the psalm is an unmistakable repetition of the same words in the hymn of Jonah? Two things make this more reasonable.

One is that the sacred writer ascribes the hymn to Jonah, who lived long before the Exile; and the other, that the saying in the hymn of Jonah, which is literal, is more likely to have been used before the saying in the psalm, which is metaphorical. The literal commonly, if not always, comes before the metaphorical. As Paul says in reference to the human body: "Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural" (1 Cor. xv. 46). There is nothing in the hymn, it seems to me, to shake, but rather everything to strengthen, the saying of the sacred writer, that Jonah is its author. All its phrases and turns of expression are perfectly fitted to Jonah's wonderful experience in the deep. If any of the psalms, in which the same phrases and turns of expression occur, were not in existence at the time of Jonah, but belong to a later period, the same genius which created the undoubtedly original parts of the hymn could easily have created the others. To deny this and insist on the later date of its composition, is not only to deny the truth of the sacred writer, but to reduce the prophet to the condition of an imbecile. The alternative is open, that the other psalmists quoted from Jonah.

There are four main points in the hymn.

I. *His affliction.* He speaks in verse second of being *in the belly of hell.* Sheol, which is here

translated *Hell*, does not mean, as we now understand the word, the abode of the lost, but the grave, or the unseen world of the dead. The sense is the same as in the well-known passage, "Thou shalt not leave my soul in Hell (Sheol): neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. xvi. 10). In the estimation of Jonah he was as good as dead. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, have erred in taking the belly of hell for the belly of the great fish. As a matter of fact, Jonah in the belly of the great fish looked upon himself as delivered from the belly of hell. What Jonah had in view was his perilous condition in the sea before he was swallowed by the great fish. But, while this is the case, his description of his past perilous condition seems to have been suggested by his present place of safety. The phrase *the belly of hell* is peculiar to Jonah. We read elsewhere of "the sorrows (cords) of hell" (Ps. xviii. 5), of "bringing up the soul from hell" (Ps. xxx. 3), and of "the gates of hell" (Matt. xvi. 18); but it is only here that we meet with "the belly of hell." As Sheol was regarded as one of the four things that do not say, "Enough," Jonah might fitly think of it as a voracious monster which had swallowed him, and his actual experience in all probability suggested the image. Thus the phrase *the belly of hell*, if not

an evidence of the historic truth of Jonah's wonderful experience and the genuineness of his prayer, at least agrees well with both.

But, after this general description of his extreme peril, Jonah next gives *special details.* His extreme peril was not on the land but in the sea: v. 3, "For Thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me; all Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me." There are two particulars in the description, which intensify the peril of being under the water with the waves rolling over him. The one is that he was *in the heart,* not merely of the sea, but *of the seas.* The plural is used to express the vastness of the surrounding waters. He was in the depths, not of an inland sea like the Sea of Galilee, but of the Great Sea which lay to the west of Palestine. The other is, that in the depth of the great sea, "the flood" or river was round about him; and so he was in the power of the resistless currents which flowed underneath. In the heart of the Great Sea Jonah was like to a man borne along by a swift-flowing stream. Both facts show that his position was one of extreme peril. Humanly speaking, he was hopelessly lost.

His dire extremity is made still more vivid by *other details:* v. 5 and 6, "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. The deep was round

about me; the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains: the earth with her bars closed upon me for ever." No one in such a position ever survived before. At the bottom of the deep sea, with the immense waters around him seeking to force their way into his body and quench the spark of life, with the entangling weeds around his head, and the coral reefs closing him in, Jonah might be said to be as good as dead and buried.

But in addition to the outward perils of the sea, there were *the inward terrors of spiritual desertion:* V. 4, "And I said, I am cast out from before Thine eyes." The drowning Jonah looked upon himself as a castaway from God; and he had good reason for so regarding himself. His own conscience and the decision of the lot proclaimed him to be the object of the Divine wrath. When the anxious sailors said to him, "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" the prophet replied, "Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." The very readiness of Jonah to die made the sailors the more eager to save his life. They betook themselves to the oars, and struggled in vain to bring the ship to land; and

then, as there was no other way open to them, they took up Jonah and cast him into the sea. They felt themselves to be the executioners of the Divine vengeance. And Jonah looked upon this act in the same light. He said in verse 3, "For thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas." In being cast out from the ship he felt like one cast out from the Presence of the Lord. Death in itself is dreadful; but death under the conscious wrath of God is more dreadful by far. The anguish of his soul in that dread hour must have been very great.

It was because Jonah was suffering from the perils of the sea and the terrors of the Divine wrath, that his soul was overwhelmed with darkness. He says, v. 7, "My soul fainted (was covered) within me." As compared with one who merely experiences the bitterness of death by drowning, Jonah might say, as did Cowper in his poem of *The Castaway*—

> "But I beneath a rougher sea,
> And 'whelmed in deeper gulfs than he."

His soul in the belly of Sheol was covered with "an horror of great darkness." His anguish must have borne some resemblance to that of Jesus, when amid the supernatural darkness He hung

upon the cross, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The consciousness of being cast out for sin from the Divine Presence is the essence of Hell's misery.

II. *His Prayer.* V. 2, "I called by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord."

The affliction of Jonah was of the most crushing and painful kind. He was in the greatest possible peril of drowning, and at the same time he was suffering from the fact that it was God who had cast him into the depths of the sea. His case was one of direst extremity. He was on the verge of going down to the darkness of death under the wrath of an offended God. In calling unto the Lord in the hour of his dire distress, he did three things.

(1) *He remembered the Lord.* V. 7, "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord." Memory is a most valuable faculty, and may be of use on all occasions, especially in seasons of distress. All knowledge is more or less useful and may be helpful in an emergency; but the most important of all kinds of knowledge is the knowledge of the Lord. And Jonah had his mind well stored with that kind of knowledge. He remembered for one thing that the Lord was *a God of grace.* The Lord

had revealed Himself as such from the very beginning of human history, in the promise of a Deliverer and in the institution of sacrifice; and He continued to do so with growing clearness. In connection with the worship of the Tabernacle and the Temple, He appeared as sitting between the cherubim above the mercy seat. His throne was conspicuously a throne of grace. His gracious character was especially revealed in the name which He proclaimed to Moses on the mount: "The Lord, the Lord God, full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin" (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7). And we know from Jonah's own lips that he was familiar with the graciousness of the Divine character. Referring to a time before his flight, and so before the storm, he says to God Himself: "I know that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil" (iv. 2).

He remembered also that the Lord was *the Hearer of prayer.* The history of the chosen people, with which Jonah was doubtless familiar, is full of illustrations of His readiness to hear the cry of the poor and the needy. Their redemption from the cruel bondage of Egypt, the sending of

manna from heaven, and the giving of water from the flinty rock, the victory over Amalek, and the healing of the bites of the fiery flying serpents, were all of them in answer to prayer. In the period of the Judges they were often in sore distress through the oppression of their enemies; but when they cried unto the Lord, He heard and delivered them out of their hands. His delivering power in answer to the cry of distress was often strikingly illustrated during the period of the Kings. He sent an abundant rain in answer to the prayer of Elijah; and at the word of Elisha the starving inhabitants of Samaria were in a single day supplied with vast stores of provisions. His power and his readiness to hear had been equal to every emergency, however hopeless deliverance might appear. And some of those wonderful deliverances, which Jonah had lovingly stored up in his memory, came back now in this time of need to his recollection. He was indeed in the darkest peril and distress; but then, as so often in the past, man's extremity might be God's opportunity. Again:

(2) *He looked to the Lord with the eye of faith.* V. 4, "And I said, I am cast out from beyond Thine eyes; *yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple.*" According to some eminent expositors,

the words express Jonah's confident expectation of being restored to the privileges of the temple at Jerusalem. Though now cast out, he believed that he would yet worship before Him in the holy city. But they seem to refer, not to what Jonah would do in the future, but to *what he actually did* in his dire extremity. Though now cast out, yet, remembering the Lord, he inwardly resolved that he would look to Him for grace and help. He had been wont to do so in his times of trouble and distress; and now he would do it again. His inward look of faith is naturally directed to the temple, the earthly dwelling-place of the Lord of grace. It was towards it that suppliants were expected to look, as we may see from Solomon's prayer at its dedication (1 Kings viii.). Even after the destruction of the temple, Daniel in Babylon prayed with the windows of his chamber open towards Jerusalem (Dan. vi. 10).

Jonah's faith in the deep darkness of his distress was remarkable. He trusted, though the Lord in anger had cast him out into the depth of the sea. He virtually said with Job, "Though they slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15); and like Abraham he "in hope believed against hope" (Rom. iv. 18). His faith resembles that of Jesus in the agony of death. Both were deserted of God in the

throes of death; both looked unto the Lord for deliverance; and both encouraged themselves to do so from the remembrance of the past. After complaining of being God-forsaken, the Messiah is represented as saying: "But thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not ashamed" (Ps. xxii. 3-5). Again:

(3) *He cried unto the Lord.* V. 2, "Out of the belly of hell cried I." As *the belly of hell* here means, not the belly of the fish, but the heart of the seas, the crying of Jonah must have been inward and not outward, of the heart and not of the voice. The outward crying of the voice in the depths of the sea was physically impossible. Had Jonah tried to do so, the surrounding waters would have rushed in by his mouth and choked him. This crying, which is always the most important part in prayer, was the inward crying of the heart. In commenting on the 30th Psalm, Augustine uses these apt and beautiful words: "Loud crying to God is not in the voice but in the heart. Many, silent with the lips, have cried aloud with their heart; many, noisy with their lips, could, with heart turned away, obtain nothing. If then thou criest,

cry within, where God heareth." As the inward crying of Jonah was for deliverance from a doleful death, there can be little doubt that it was intensely earnest and sincere; and as it was the crying of one who "remembered the Lord," and who "would look towards His holy temple," his prayer had also the acceptable quality of faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. xi. 6). And this earnest believing cry which came from the heart of the drowning Jonah, was at once heard.

III. *His Deliverance.*—This he expresses at least thrice in the prayer. He says, v. 2, "I called by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and *He answered me;* out of the belly of hell cried I, and *Thou heardest my voice.*" Again, in the 6th verse he says: "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars closed upon me for ever: yet *Thou hast brought up my life from the pit*, O Lord my God." And again in the 7th verse he says: "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord: and *my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple.*"

Jonah, as we are told in the first verse, was in the belly of the great fish, when he acknowledged that the Lord had answered his prayer, and granted him deliverance. His deliverance therefore must

have been brought about by the great fish, which the Lord had prepared, swallowing him up and preserving him in its belly. Had Jonah been left in the gloomy depths of the sea, he must have perished. There he was, as it were, in the belly of hell. But it may be said, and said with truth, that the belly of the great fish was as much the belly of hell as the depths of the great sea. In the one death was as certain as in the other. Most would be inclined to think that the belly of the great fish was the more destructive place of the two, and had a better claim to the descriptive phrase, "the belly of hell." But the Lord, in the exercise of His wonder-working power, made this natural place of destruction a place of safety for Jonah. It was a wonderful and supernatural deliverance.

Perhaps the prophet for a time did not realise his position. His tossing to and fro in the angry sea must have dazed and exhausted him, and made him oblivious of his surroundings; but as soon as he came to realise that he was alive in the belly of a great fish, he would gladly see in that an answer to his prayer. His wonderful preservation would be to him not only a proof that the wrath of God was appeased, but also an earnest and pledge of his final restoration to all the privileges of life. He would feel, as did Paul about the final salvation of

the Philippian brethren, when he wrote to them, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus" (Phil. i. 6).

The wonderful preservation of Jonah in the belly of the great fish is, as I have already pointed out in a previous chapter, a striking shadow or type of the burial of Jesus in the rock-hewn tomb of Joseph. Here I shall confine myself to one point of resemblance on which I have not yet touched. Jonah in the belly of the great fish was, as it were, in a sepulchre; but the fact that he was alive showed that the wrath which had cast him into the sea was pacified. The face of the Lord, instead of now being against him, was manifestly beaming upon him in love. Instead of destroying, the Lord had delivered him. And this change of the wrath of the Lord into favour in the case of Jonah is *a shadow of the change which took place in the case of Jesus before His body was laid in the sepulchre.* The wrath of God was upon Jesus as He hung upon the cross. He was then, as it were, in the belly of hell. The supernatural darkness which surrounded Him was an outward picture of that inward gloom which sprang from the total eclipse of His Father's love. The sense of the Divine desertion, of being cast out as an accursed

one, wrung from Him the loud and bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But before He gave up the ghost He was able to cry, "It is finished!" and "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The wrath was now changed into complacency; and as a token of that wonderful change, the outward supernatural darkness passed away, and the sun once more shone forth with full-orbed radiance in a cloudless sky.

IV. *His Gratitude.*—He not only acknowledged God in his deliverance, but concludes his hymn of praise thus: verses 8 and 9, "They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."

(1) *He owns the Lord as the only source of blessedness.* "They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy." His own misery in fleeing from God's Presence leads the prophet to think of the miserable condition of idolaters. The idols which the heathen regard or reverence are *lying vanities,* inasmuch as they are nonentities and inspire vain hopes. They cannot hear or help their votaries. And what is said of literal idols may with equal truth be said of all earthly things to which men give the supreme affection and confidence of their hearts.

All the idols of the human heart are found to be in the long run lying vanities. They are vain and disappointing confidences. "Vanity of vanities," cries Solomon, "all is vanity" (Eccl. i. 2).

They that regard lying vanities, says the prophet, *forsake their own mercy.* Many eminent commentators understand "mercy" here to be equivalent to God, as when David says of Him, "Thy Goodness, or Lovingkindness, or Mercy" (Ps. cxliv. 2). It seems better to take it in a general or indefinite sense. The idolaters are bent on securing their own happiness in the favour of their gods; but, instead of finding their happiness, they in reality aggravate their misery. Instead of coming nearer to the goal, they go farther and farther away from it. Instead of finding mercy, they forsake it. The only one in whom mercy can be found is the Lord. And of that mercy the psalmist exclaims: "How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxvi. 7-9).

(2) *He resolves and vows to offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving.* He contrasts himself with the

idolaters. They regard lying vanities; "but I," says Jonah, "will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving." He promises to be a grateful and faithful worshipper of the Lord. He had been guilty of fleeing from the presence of the Lord; but he vows that he will do so no more. And it is exceedingly probable that the first thing which he did, after his restoration from the belly of the fish, was to go up to Jerusalem, and offer sacrifices at the temple, with thankful acknowledgments for his miraculous deliverance.

(3) *The doxology.* He then concludes this rich and beautiful hymn of praise with the doxology, "Salvation is of the Lord." Here the grateful prophet ascribes to the Lord, not only his own deliverance, but deliverances in general, and especially the deliverance of His own people. His words throb with the same grateful and jubilant emotion as those of the great white-robed and palm-bearing multitude before the throne, as they cry with a loud voice, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 10).

CHAPTER IX.

JONAH'S PREACHING AT NINEVEH.

(Chap. III. 1-4.)

"One small life in God's great plan,
How futile it seems as the ages roll,
Do what it may or strive how it can
To alter the sweep of the infinite whole!
A single stitch in an endless web,
A drop in the ocean's flow and ebb!
But the pattern is rent where the stitch is lost,
Or marred where the tangled threads have crossed;
And each life that fails of its true intent
Mars the perfect plan that the Master meant."

—*Susan Coolidge.*

NOTHING is said in the book of Jonah either as to the future of the sailors on board the ship of Tarshish after the hushing of the storm, or as to the shore on which the prophet was cast after his three days' residence in the belly of the great fish. Perhaps the sailors returned to Joppa for the refitting of the ship—in its dismantled condition this might be the only course open to them—and

Jonah might have been vomited out upon the shore near to that seaport, so that those who had been so tragically separated during the storm, might shortly after have met and talked together of what had befallen them in the interval. The minute and circumstantial character of the narrative seems to imply that such intercourse took place then or at some future time.

On coming back to Joppa the sailors would doubtless tell the inhabitants of the terrific storm which had burst upon them and of the tragic end of their passenger ; and, as Jonah was an outstanding prophet of the land of Israel, the sad news of his death for refusing to go to Nineveh, as the Lord commanded, would quickly spread through the Holy Land, and perhaps even find its way to the distant capital of Assyria. One or two days after their arrival, Jonah, who may have been cast out on the adjoining shore, would naturally return to Joppa, especially if he saw the ship of Tarshish lying in the harbour or riding at anchor in the offing. He would be eager to hear how it fared with the brave and noble men who had sought to save his life at the risk of their own ; and perhaps he came to them, as they were busy in getting the ship ready or quietly talking on deck about his own sad fate, and greeted them with the salutation, "Peace be unto you."

As they beheld him, they probably felt somewhat of the same joyful amazement which the disciples experienced in the upper chamber when the risen Lord appeared in their midst on the evening of the day of His resurrection. Some of them at the first may have doubted that he was the man whom they had cast out into the raging sea; but, as they gazed on his face and listened to the tone of his voice while he was telling them of his wonderful deliverance, this doubt would give place to certainty. Though his story made them marvel exceedingly, the sailors would accept it without question as true, not only because they knew that Jonah was a man of eminent candour, but also because it was in perfect keeping with the marvellous history of the storm, and because it alone could satisfactorily account for his being alive and well. And while the sailors would be delighted and amazed at Jonah's wonderful experience in the deep, Jonah would be equally delighted and amazed at the story of their wonderful experience in the ship. They had not only been marvellously preserved, but had become marvellously changed in heart and life. From being heathen idolaters they were now the devoted worshippers of the Lord.

After this brief but gladsome visit to the sailors,

Jonah would go up to Jerusalem to thank the Lord in the temple for his deliverance. He had vowed to do so during his imprisonment in the belly of the great fish. He had said to God in his hymn of praise: "They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy; but I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving: I will pay that which I have vowed." And now that he had been completely delivered and restored to the full freedom of life, there seems no reason to doubt that he would carry out the resolution so solemnly and so decidedly formed. When he appeared in the sacred courts, publicly offering up sacrifices to the Lord for his wonderful deliverance, and perhaps singing his own hymn of praise, he would cause no small stir among the people, especially as they had in all likelihood heard of his tragic end upon the sea. As he was a well-known and trusted prophet, his public thanksgiving would give certainty, as well as wings to the strange story of his deliverance; and in a short time the story, which excited the wonder and astonishment of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, would be heard from the lips of citizens in the great Assyrian capital itself.

After the public thanksgiving at the temple Jonah returned to the land of Israel, perhaps to its capital, Samaria, and probably resumed his prophetic labours;

and in doing so he was not silent, we may be sure, regarding the punishment of his disobedience and his wonderful deliverance from the pit of destruction. The theme was well fitted to give point to his warnings against sin and his exhortations to hope in the Divine mercy. There is nothing said in the narrative as to the length of time between the first and second commission of Jonah to go to Nineveh, though the likelihood is that it was brief, only an interval of a few weeks; but Jonah, at all events, was making no preparations to carry out the original command, and was perhaps cherishing the hope that he would never hear of it again. One day, however, as he was resting from his labours, or more probably one night as he was lying asleep, the word of the Lord came to him again, saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

There seems to be in the second command less of the openness of friendship and more of the authority of a master than in the first. In the first command the Lord said: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me." There He reveals His reason for acting as He was doing. But in the second command He treats Jonah purely as a servant. He was to go and preach as he was bid.

The austere form of the command was due to the former disobedience, and was meant to remind Jonah of it. Divine discoveries depend on the measure of obedience. The psalmist says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Ps. xxv. 14); and during the Last Supper Jesus said to His disciples: "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him" (John xiv. 21).

On hearing the command Jonah arose, not to flee as on the former occasion, but to obey. "So," says the second narrative, "Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." The difference between the action of Jonah now and then was due to the stern discipline which he had undergone. He had suffered much for his former disobedience. He imagined that he could flee from the presence of the Lord and escape untouched; but the Lord had caught him with a storm, and had cast him out into the depths of an angry sea. The fugitive had suffered both the terrors of drowning and the anguish of an outcast soul; and although the Lord had graciously delivered him, yet the memory of that bitter experience deterred him from fleeing again. He might well say with the

psalmist: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe Thy word" (Ps. cxix. 67).

After the statement that Jonah went to Nineveh, we read in verse 3, "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city (a city great to God), of three days' journey." Now, as we have already, in a former chapter, fully considered the vast size of this ancient capital, we need say nothing more about it here. The only point to which I would call attention is, the fact *that its greatness is asserted in the past tense.* Some have unwarrantably assumed that this is a proof of the late authorship of the book of Jonah. They imagine that when the writer says, "Now Nineveh *was*," he needs must mean that at the time he wrote the great city had been destroyed and numbered amongst the things that were. The words are indeed consistent with that idea, but they are equally consistent with the idea that it was, when he wrote, still in the full flush of prosperity. The evangelist John, in his account of our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, observes: "So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well *was* there" (John iv. 6). Here, you will observe, the existence of Jacob's well is expressed in the past tense. By this John means to say, not that

Jacob's well had ceased to be when he wrote, but that it was there when Jesus visited the spot. As a matter of fact the well not only existed then, but has existed from that day to this. Again, the same evangelist, in pointing out the locality of our Lord's sepulchre, uses the words: "Now in the place where He was crucified there *was* a garden; and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid" (John xix. 41). The existence of the garden is here also expressed in the past tense. This simply means that there was a garden near that spot at the time of the Crucifixion, without implying that it had ceased to be, which is extremely unlikely, and which, if it were a fact, was almost certain to be beyond the knowledge of the evangelist, who wrote his gospel far away from Jerusalem. It is a common use of the past tense; and one thing which shows that we ought to interpret this saying about Nineveh in the same way, is the fact that there is nothing in the book of Jonah about the destruction of the great city. The third verse simply means that Nineveh was a great city when Jonah came to it to preach. The idea which the book of Jonah naturally suggests is, that when it was composed the great city was still in a flourishing condition, without the smallest cloud in its sky.

Before touching on Jonah's preaching in Nineveh, there are three points in connection with his mission to which I would call attention. (1.) His mission to Nineveh took place *after his wonderful deliverance.* Before his wonderful deliverance the ministry of Jonah had been confined to the land of Israel; but now it was extended to the Gentiles, in their greatest and most influential city. This arrangement was according to the deliberate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The first command to go to Nineveh was given indeed to Jonah before his wonderful experience in the deep, and had he obeyed, as he ought to have done, that wonderful experience would never have taken place; but in issuing the command God foreknew that Jonah would disobey, and He determined to punish him by casting him into the sea, and after preserving him in the belly of a great fish for three days to restore him once more to the land. The disobedience of the prophet was overruled for the carrying out of the Divine plan, that the mission to Nineveh should take place after his three days' imprisonment in the deep.

And the timing of the mission of Jonah to Nineveh is a shadow of the timing of the mission of Jesus to the Gentiles. The ministry of Jesus during his earthly life was confined to the Holy land.

When he sent forth the twelve apostles to preach, He said to them: "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x. 5, 6). On one occasion, when He was on the borders of Tyre and Sidon, propably for rest and retirement, a Syro-Phœnician woman besought Him for her daughter, grievously tormented with a devil; but, instead of at once listening to her as he was in the habit of doing to His own people, he answered her not a word; and for so acting He said to His disciples: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24). In the Passion week, perhaps on the Tuesday, only three days before the Crucifixion, certain Greeks, who had come up to worship at the feast, said to Philip, one of the apostles: "Sir, we would see Jesus." Jesus at the time was probably in the inner court of the temple, while the Greeks were in the outer court of the Gentiles. When their request was made known to Him, Jesus said to His disciples: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit." He also said to them at the same time: "And I, if I be lifted up from

the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John xii. 23, 24, 32). The hour for the ingathering of the Gentiles, though not yet actually come, was on the point of striking; but before the event arrived He must be lifted up on the cross, and through the cross to the throne. Like a grain of wheat, He must die and be laid in the earth ere He could grow up and become a source of life to multitudes of men. His dreaded death was indispensable to His success. That which was to them the grand object of repulsion was to become the grand source of His attractive power.

It was after His resurrection that he said to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). He did not indeed go personally, like Jonah, as a prophet to the Gentiles; but He went in the ministry of the Spirit and in the persons of His disciples. It was Jesus who poured out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and aided His disciples in spreading the gospel. The hand of the Lord was with them. As Peter said to the people in the temple at the close of his discourse about the healing of the lame man at its Beautiful gate: "Unto you *first* God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts iii. 26). The

mission of Jesus to the Gentile world was mirrored beforehand in the mission of Jonah to Nineveh. As Jonah did not go to Nineveh till after his wonderful deliverance from the deep, so Jesus was not to go to the Gentiles till after His resurrection from the dead.

(2.) The wonderful experience of Jonah *fitted him for preaching to the Ninevites.* Jonah was not indeed an ideal preacher, inasmuch as he was without a sympathetic love for those to whom he was to preach. Instead of longing for the salvation of the Ninevites, he longed for their destruction with intense desire. Still Jonah at the time of his second call was doubtless in many ways better fitted for the work of preaching than he was at the time of the first. His bitter experience in the deep *had subdued the rebelliousness of his spirit.* The fugitive prophet was now willing to go to Nineveh and proclaim the message which the Lord might give him. But, in addition to the spirit of obedience, his wonderful experience wrought in him *a deeper sense of the awfulness of the Divine wrath.* He had suffered not only the fury of the storm and the terrors of drowning, but what gave the sting to these, the consciousness of being cast out from the Divine Presence; and his own felt sense of the Divine wrath would enable him to speak of it in

deeper and more earnest tones. Besides, his wonderful experience could hardly fail *to make him more tender and sympathetic.* Suffering, especially when combined, as in the case of Jonah, with penitence and a sense of the Divine mercy, tends to make one more pitiful and humane. The most tried are, as a rule, the most tender and considerate. Jonah, we know, had not let suffering have her perfect work; he still eagerly longed for the destruction of the Assyrian capital; but it seems to me certain that, in consequence of his bitter experience in the deep, his voice at Nineveh would have in it a softer and a more sympathetic ring. And once more, his wonderful experience would inspire him with *a more ardent devotion to the Divine will.* God's great mercy in delivering him from the belly of hell, and permitting him once again to walk at liberty in the land of the living, wielded over him a constraining power. He was now, as he had never been before, ready for service.

And in like manner the wonderful experience of Jesus in His death and resurrection, of which that of Jonah was but a faint shadow, fitted him for being the Prophet to the world. In Him there was no natural aversion to the salvation of the Gentiles to be overcome. His will from the first was in

perfect harmony with the Divine. He said: "Lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 7, 8). But at the same time His wonderful experience in His death and resurrection wrought in Him a deeper sense of the Divine wrath, a more tender sympathy and love, and a more ardent zeal for the doing of His Divine Father's will. He not only learned obedience by the things which He suffered, but was made perfect through suffering (Heb. ii. 10; v. 8, 9). He has all the needful personal qualifications of a prophet in an immeasurable degree. Jonah was but the shadow, and not the very image, of the great Prophet to the Gentiles who was afterwards to come.

(3.) Jonah's wonderful experience *clothed him with a remarkable convincing and converting power.* In the previous head this memorable experience of Jonah was looked at as it affected the prophet himself; but here it is looked at as it affected the inhabitants of Nineveh. There is no reason to doubt that the Ninevites heard of the remarkable experience of Jonah before he reached the capital. The sailors on their return to Joppa, and Jonah in his public thanksgiving at Jerusalem, would make it known in Palestine; such a wonderful experi-

ence as that of Jonah could hardly be hid; and the strange story, especially from its connection with the prophet's mission to Nineveh, would be eagerly conveyed thither by the traders and told in the streets and bazaars. Though there were no railroads or telegraphs in those ancient times, yet the report of wonderful events, through the medium of the caravans, spread with great rapidity among the nations. The inhabitants of Canaan were manifestly, from the words of Rahab to the spies, well acquainted with the wonders which God had wrought for Israel in Egypt (Josh. ii. 9-11). And what might easily happen in the ordinary course of events, the fact that Jesus speaks of Jonah being a sign to the Ninevites seems to show that God in His providence had actually secured. There are three ways in which Jonah's marvellous experience was a sign to the Ninevites.

First of all, his wonderful experience was a *sign that Jonah was a true prophet of the Lord.* As Jonah was a distinguished prophet in the land of Israel, it is more than likely that his fame had reached the Assyrian capital before the period of his mission. Balaam of Pethor in Mesopotamia was well known to Balak, the king of Moab, and Elisha to Ben-hadad, king of Syria; but at all events, Jonah's miraculous deliverance would invest

him in their eyes with a peculiar sacredness and authority. It showed that he was an object of special interest to the Most High God. The God of heaven had not only cast him into the sea for refusing to go to Nineveh, but had preserved him for three days in the belly of a great fish and then restored him to land. In coming to them after his wonderful deliverance, Jonah came with the unmistakable mark of the Divine power. The Lord was manifestly with him. And that fact would lead the Ninevites to listen reverently to his message.

And what Jonah was to Nineveh, Jesus is to the world. Jesus on one occasion said to the multitudes: "This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation" (Luke xi. 29, 30). And Jesus became this sign when He rose again from the dead on the third day. This was the sign which He gave the Jews at His first passover, when He said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19). His resurrection from the dead on the third day, like Jonah's restoration on the third day from the belly of the great fish, was conclusive proof that he was a true prophet of the Most High.

He claimed to be a prophet, the prophet of the Lord; and His resurrection from the dead clearly established this claim (Rom. i. 4). It showed that God was with Him and had sent Him.

Again, the wonderful experience of Jonah was *a sign to the Ninevites of the awfulness of the Divine wrath.* Jonah imagined that he could escape from the Presence of the Lord by fleeing unto Tarshish; but the God of heaven made the prophet feel that he could not escape His vengeance. He not only arrested the ship in which he was sailing with a great storm, and made the lot fall upon Jonah as the guilty party, but caused the storm to blow with such terrific violence that the sailors on board felt compelled to take him up and cast him out into the angry sea. This punishment of the prophet was a striking exhibition of the Divine wrath; and in his own example Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites that the wrath of God is a dreadful thing. The inhabitants of the Assyrian capital might say when they saw him: "That is the man who was in the belly of hell." He was a living sermon to them of the power of God's anger.

And what Jonah was to the Ninevites, Jesus is to the world. Though sinless, He endured as the sinners' substitute the wrath of the Holy One of Israel. Its vivid anticipation in the Garden of

Gethsemane put Him into an agony and led him to cry with strong crying and tears: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). But as man could be saved in no other way, He showed the same readiness to die which Jonah did, when he said to the sailors: "Take me up and cast me forth into the sea." He said to Peter shortly after, "The cup which the Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it" (John xviii. 11). And as we look on His cross with its pain and shame, and hear His cry amid the horror of great darkness, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" we behold a most alarming and impressive exhibition of the Divine wrath. His death for sin was much more awful than that of Jonah. Those who imagine that God is too merciful to punish sinners, and who make light of the wrath of God, have only to look on the Cross to be convinced that they are cherishing a delusive dream. If God spared not His own Son, He is not likely to spare ungodly sinners. If such things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And so in His death the Great Prophet stands forth to the world, like Jonah at Nineveh, as a sign of the awfulness of the Divine wrath.

Again, the wonderful experience of Jonah was *a*

sign to the Ninevites of the richness of the Divine mercy. He had fallen through the punishment of God on his sin into the direst extremity of danger. He was in the depths of the sea, far from land, with the weeds wrapt about his head; and, so far as human help is concerned, he was hopelessly lost; but the drowning prophet looked with his inner eye towards the temple, and cried for mercy in the anguish of his soul, and the Lord heard his cry and delivered him. The manner, too, of his deliverance reveals the marvellous resources of the Divine power. He made a monster of the deep, whose instinct is to destroy, swallow the drowning man and keep him safe and sound in its capacious belly for three days, and then vomit him out upon the dry land. His great mercy was seen to be allied to marvellous power. And so Jonah became a living sermon to the Ninevites, not only of the power of the Divine anger, but also of the riches of the Divine mercy.

And what Jonah was to the Ninevites, Jesus is to the world. When dying for sin Jesus, like Jonah, was in the direst extremity. He was in danger of perishing in the belly of hell. His anguish of soul in the Garden of Gethsemane caused Him to perspire great drops of bloody sweat; but like Jonah He cried unto Him who was able to save

Him from death; and, although he carried the load of a world's guilt, the Lord in mercy heard Him and raised Him from the dead on the third day. His resurrection, seeing that he suffered for the sins of men, is a sign to the world that God is rich in mercy and ready to forgive. Jonah in his punishment and restoration for the sake of the Ninevites, is a shadow of Jesus in His death and resurrection for the sake of the world.

The wonderful experience of Jonah is thus seen to be, not a useless display of supernatural power, but a means towards grand and important ends. Besides giving a shadow of the still more wonderful experience of the coming Messiah, it made him a sign to the Ninevites, inasmuch as he came to them not only as one approved of God, but as one who exhibited in his own person the awfulness of the Divine wrath and the richness of the Divine mercy. His wonderful experience would give immense weight to his preaching. It may be safely said that, apart from it, his ministry at Nineveh would have been a complete failure.

After a long and toilsome journey Jonah at last reached the great city of Nineveh, and either lodged for the night in some house of the Assyrians, or lay like Jacob at Luz in one of the outlying fields. It was probably during the night after his arrival,

as he lay asleep, that the word of the Lord came to him again, giving him the message which he was to preach; and next morning, probably very early, "Jonah," we are told, "began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

The word "began" seems to refer, not to the first day's journey in the city by itself, but to the first day's journey in its relation to his intended visiting of the whole city. He perhaps thought when he set out that he could visit the whole city in a single day; but he found that, on account of its enormous size, he could in one day only make a beginning; and, so far as appears from the narrative, his original plan of visiting the whole city was never carried out, as his preaching seems to have ended with the first day. If Jonah travelled, as is most likely, by the ordinary caravan route, he would enter the great city at its northern end, or Nineveh proper; and he might then walk southwards to Calah (Nimroud) at its southern end, a distance of about twenty miles in a straight line; but as we are ignorant of the internal construction of the great city, we can at the best but speculate as to the course which he was likely to take. In a city of three days' journey, or of sixty miles in circum-

ference, it is clear that the prophet could only travel through a part of it in a single day.

It is not necessary to suppose, as some do, that the preaching began at the close of the first day's journey; it seems much more likely that Jonah preached or cried as he went along. As the inhabitants had in all probability heard much about Jonah and his mission before he appeared, the prophet would not need to spend much time either in telling the people who he was or in explaining the nature of his message. For the most part, his simple cry, as he hurried along clad in prophet's garb, would be, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

CHAPTER X.

THE REPENTANCE OF NINEVEH.

(Chap. III. 5-10.)

"There is a holy sacrifice
Which God in heaven will not despise,
Yea, which is precious in His eyes,
The contrite heart."

THE message which Jonah brought to the inhabitants of the great Assyrian capital was simple and startling. He cried with the energy of a divinely-inspired prophet: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." It was a message which all ranks and classes, from the highest to the lowest, could easily understand. Its very brevity made it easy of comprehension. And the message was as startling as it was simple. Nineveh was the largest, the richest, and the most strongly fortified city in the world; and yet the foreign prophet proclaimed as a message from the God of heaven that in the short period of forty days this great city would be turned upside down. The

very word which Jonah had employed to describe the overthrow of Nineveh, is the same as is used in reference to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha and the cities of the plain (Gen. xix. 25). As Jonah moved along through its busy streets and bazaars, he may have sometimes stopped in his course to tell the people who and what he was, and that his God had sent him thither to announce the doom of their city for its wickedness; but, as the people had already some knowledge of the prophet and his mission, the likelihood seems to be that he would confine himself to the simple but alarming cry: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

Brevity is often a mark of Divine warnings. The burden of Elijah to Ahab was: "As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to My word" (1 Kings xvii. 1). The doom of Babylon which God wrote on the wall of the spacious chamber of the king's palace, was: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,"—a message which blanched the countenance of Belshazzar and made his knees tremble and smite one against another (Dan. v. 5-28). The burden of John the Baptist, which awoke the Jewish nation from its lethargy, was: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

(Matt. iii. 3). Before the downfall of Jerusalem, as Josephus informs us, an unlettered rustic sounded in its streets for several years its coming doom in a brief, loud cry. Though beaten by the people and whipped by the Roman procurator, he contiuued to cry, " Woe, woe, to Jerusalem." " This cry," says Josephus, " was loudest at the festivals, and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months without growing hoarse or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased ; for, as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with the utmost force, 'Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!' And, just as he added at the last, 'Woe, woe, to myself also!' there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately " (" Wars of the Jews," vi. 5, 3).

But, while the warnings of God to the Israelitish people were in general received with unbelieving indifference, His warning through Jonah to the Ninevites produced the most marvellous and salutary results. We read, verse 5 : " And the people of Nineveh believed God ; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." The inhabitants in a body, wherever Jonah preached, at once accepted the

message, not only as coming from God, but as a word of truth. They believed not only that the God of Israel intended, but that He was able to overthrow their great city at the end of forty days; and as the impending judgment was for their wickedness, they sought at once to avert it by a timely repentance. They forthwith proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth. The inhabitants were so keenly alive to their dread peril that, without waiting for the action of their superiors, they at once adopted the most likely means to avert it. Great emergencies demand and justify the use of extraordinary methods. The peril was too awful and near for a moment's delay.

Fasting and the wearing of sackcloth were the outward signs of mourning common in ancient times amongst the peoples of the east. The affliction of the body was made a symbol of the affliction of the soul. Jacob expressed his grief for the loss of Joseph, and Job for his calamitous condition, by putting on sackcloth (Gen. xxxvii. 34; Job xvi. 15). Besides, the outward signs of mourning naturally tended to increase the inward reality. As all the citizens in the line of Jonah's one day's journey in the metropolis were alarmed at the impending judgment, and anxious to avert it by appeasing the Divine wrath, the news of

Jonah's preaching would spread through the whole city with great rapidity; and at length, perhaps the last on account of the guarded seclusion of the court, it reached the palace of the great king himself. We read at verse 6: "And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes."

The great ones of the earth are prone to become proud and deaf to warning and rebuke; and the king of Nineveh, on account of the vast strength and glory of his capital and empire, was peculiarly liable to become so; but, instead of regarding the announcement of Nineveh's impending doom by Jonah with indifference and contempt, he showed a spirit of even deeper penitence than the citizens. This king, whom we take to be Assurdam III., arose from his throne, the seat of his royal dignity and power, and humbled himself to the very dust. He laid aside his robe, a large and richly-embroidered mantle, the usual adorning of a king. The word which is here used for *robe*, and which implies amplitude, is the same as that given to "the goodly Babylonish garment," which was found by Achan amongst the spoils of Jericho (Josh. vii. 21). In its place the king put on sackcloth, the usual sign of mourning, and he sat in ashes, the usual sign for the deepest

humiliation (Job ii. 8). He who was highest in the empire took the very lowest position of abasement. Outwardly, at all events, the king acted in the most becoming way, and displayed a spirit of the deepest humility and contrition.

The Royal Edict. Besides setting an example of mourning and humiliation, the king *issued an edict in perfect keeping with his example.* It is said in verses 7, 8, and 9 : " And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing ; let them not feed nor drink water ; but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God ; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ? "

This royal proclamation was issued by the authority of the king and his nobles. This seems to imply that the form of government in Assyria was not an absolute, but a limited monarchy. Something similar seems to have existed at Babylon in the days of Darius the Mede, as we read in the book of Daniel of Darius sealing the mouth of the lions' den with his own signet, and with the signet

of his lords (Dan. vi. 17). The peculiar word, which is here used for decree, is *Taam;* and as substantially the same word occurs several times in Ezra and Daniel, its use here is taken by some as a proof of the late authorship of the book. As *Taam*, however, was probably the very word which the king and his nobles applied to the royal proclamation, its use here seems to be a striking proof, not only of the historic truth of the narrative, but also that Jonah was the author of the book. Pusey says in his Introduction to the Book of Jonah: "This is a Syriac word; and accordingly, since it has now been ascertained beyond all question, that the language of Nineveh was a dialect of Syriac, it was, with a Hebrew pronunciation, the very word used of this decree at Nineveh."

There are four points in the royal edict which are worthy of our special attention.

(1.) One is, that *the domestic animals were to be associated with the people in fasting and mourning.* The king and his nobles recognised the fact that *both were exposed to the impending judgment of God.* The overthrow of the city would involve the domestic animals in a common grave with the people. The innocent animals would suffer along with the guilty inhabitants. This is a particular illustration of the general truth which Paul states,

when he says: "The creature was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it." "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. viii. 20, 22). It was God's will, the ordained constitution of the world, that man's sin should cast its dark shadow, not only over the human race, but over the whole earth with all that it contains.

Again, in associating the two in fasting and mourning, the king and his nobles *seem to have believed that God cared for the domestic animals.* The fact is often asserted by the sacred writers, as, *e.g.*, "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps. cxlv. 9), and "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (cxlvii. 9). It is prominent too in the teaching of our Lord. He said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" (Matt. vi. 26). In another of His discourses the words occur, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" (Luke xii. 6). Now the king and his nobles might come to care for the

domestic animals, not only from the observation of Divine providence, but also from their own loving nature ; and they might conclude that, if *they* cared for the domestic animals, the God of heaven would care much more for them. They seem to have been inspired with the hope that, when God saw the domestic animals fasting and mourning, His love for them would induce Him to avert the impending judgment. The action is a beautiful illustration of the saying, " Necessity is the mother of invention."

Again, in associating the two, *they seem also to have aimed at intensifying the fasting and mourning of the people.* Mankind in all ages and of all nations have shown a disposition to associate the domestic animals with themselves in their seasons of joy and sorrow. In our own land the horses used at a marriage are decorated with something bright, while those used at a funeral are adorned with something sombre. Sombre things at a marriage or festive occasion, and brilliant things at a funeral or mournful occasion, are felt to be out of harmony. Now the intense earnestness of the king and the nobles of Nineveh in this matter of congruity, is seen in their making the fasting and the wearing of sackcloth on the part of the domestic animals a part of the royal proclamation. They were evidently

bent on making the humiliation of Nineveh for its sins of the deepest and most impressive kind, not so much perhaps as regards the people, though that possibly was in their aim, as in its relation to God. Their chief aim in this mournful demonstration was to move the heart of God and lead Him to relent. Had the fasting and the wearing of sackcloth by the inhabitants been without the fasting and the wearing of sackcloth by the domestic animals, the humiliation of Nineveh would have lacked as a spectacle an element of impressiveness. The outward brightness of the domestic animals, too, would have tended to lessen the sombre seriousness of the inhabitants. Their gladsome surroundings would have helped to make the deadly peril less real to popular apprehension. On the other hand, the mournful condition of the domestic animals would have the effect of intensifying their own mournful condition; and the king and his nobles naturally concluded that what was to them a more impressive exhibition of humiliation for sin would be so also to God.

(2.) The second point in the royal edict is *earnest prayer for the Divine mercy*: "And let them cry mightily unto God." The words were addressed to the inhabitants, *mainly in relation to themselves*. There were two things which made it peculiarly

incumbent on them to cry mightily unto God. One is, that they were *the guilty parties.* The domestic animals had done nothing amiss to bring down the wrath of God upon the city. The entire blame lay with the king and his people; and as they were the sole cause of the impending judgment, it was meet that they should especially cry mightily to God for its removal. The other is, that *they alone could intelligently do so.* The domestic animals were incapable of apprehending the impending judgment. As the threatened doom of Nineveh was out of sight, and an object only of faith, it was beyond their reach; and even if they had been capable of realising the danger, they were incapable of intelligently beseeching God for deliverance. They cannot rise from nature unto nature's God. The only god of the domestic animals is man himself.

The injunction, too, which betokened the intense reality of the faith of the king and his nobles, *was most becoming.* The dreaded evil was both great and near. Through Jonah God had threatened to overthrow Nineveh, and that in the brief period of forty days. It was therefore both most fit and urgent that all the inhabitants should not merely pray, but cry mightily unto God. Now if such earnestness in prayer was becoming to the inhabi-

tants of Nineveh in reference to the threatened doom of their city, it is much more becoming in sinners in reference to the wrath to come. The threatened doom of sinners, of which the Word of God is full, is more to be dreaded than the threatened doom of Nineveh. The destruction of Nineveh affected only the body and the interests of the present, while the destruction of the ungodly involves the ruin both of the body and the soul and of the interests of eternity. They are to be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; and that awful doom may come to a sinner, not merely after the lapse of forty days, but on any day and at any moment. But men in general do not, like the people of Nineveh, believe God; they treat the threatened doom as a baseless dream, the phantom of a deranged imagination, and not as the sure word of prophecy; or, if they believe God, they but dimly realise the awfulness of the threatening, and so but feebly long and pray for deliverance. If men but realised the impending doom of the ungodly, as the king of Nineveh and his nobles did the doom overhanging their city, they too would feel the urgency of crying mightily unto God.

But the injunction, while it had the inhabitants mainly in view, *applied also to the domestic animals.* The inhabitants are not only to cry mightily unto

God themselves, but to see to it that the domestic animals did the same. They were not only to cover them with sackcloth, but to withhold from them food and water; and as the result of this enforced abstinence the domestic animals would cry mightily for their customary food and drink. As there were much cattle in Nineveh, the cries which came from them in their hungering and thirsty condition, must have been a striking accompaniment to the supplications of the people. The orchestra was not only large but of the most varied kind; it embraced oxen, sheep, dogs, horses, asses, and other animals; and when we think of the lowing of the oxen, the bleating of the sheep, the whining of the dogs, the neighing of the horses, the braying of the asses, and other cries, all expressed in the piercing tones of earnest petition, we may imagine that the effect was peculiarly weird and impressive. Though the object of the animals was different from that of the people, the one being food and water and the other the sparing of the city, yet the cries of the animals were in perfect unison with the supplications of the people, and would add to their intensity and power. Their cries were instinctive supplications to God, according to the saying of the psalmist: "The young lions roar for their prey, and seek their meat from God" (Ps. civ.

21); and as they were due to the action of the inhabitants, and were intended by them to influence God to spare the city, they became transformed into petitions for the Divine mercy. The domestic animals were thus ingeniously made to strengthen the supplications of the people. It was the witty invention of a deep and earnest faith.

(3.) The third point in the edict is *their practical reformation.* "Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." The king and his nobles were bent on a thorough repentance. The inhabitants were not only to put on the outward signs of mourning and earnestly to cry to God, but also to put away from them all manner of wickedness. This they enjoined upon *every one of them.* The inhabitants of a great city like Nineveh do not all sin in the same way. The officials of the government and those under their control, the nobles and the common people, the rich and the poor, the masters and the servants, have all their peculiar temptations and faults; and men of even the same class, on account of their variety in disposition and circumstances, have their own besetting sins. The sins of men are also as diverse as the men themselves. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." And so, in order that no sort of wickedness

might be overlooked, the king and his nobles enjoined that every one of the inhabitants *should turn from his own evil way*. They recognised that the efficiency of a general repentance depends on its efficiency in the case of the separate individuals.

The only particular sin which they note is *violence*, the outstanding sin of the Assyrians. The people of this ancient empire, who have been called the Romans of the East, were like ravening wolves or rapacious wild beasts amongst the nations. It was their custom to invade and despoil the countries of their neighbours. "The Assyrian records," says Layard, "are nothing but a dry register of military campaigns, spoliations, and cruelties." The prophet Nahum, who flourished some considerable time after Jonah, describes Nineveh as a den of lions, filled with prey and with rapine, the feeding-place of young lions, where the lion tore enough for his whelps, and as the bloody city full of lies and rapine, from which their prey does not depart. But at this crisis in their history the king and his nobles enjoined them *to turn from the violence that was in their hands*. This seems to mean two things—(1) to abandon their predatory and oppressive habits, and (2) to restore, as far as may be, their ill-gotten gains. Their hands were neither to do cruel wrong nor to retain the proceeds.

(4) The fourth point in the edict is *their hope of a favourable result:* "Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" The king and his nobles, in enjoining such a course as they did, had no guarantee that, in consequence of this course, God would relent and remove the impending judgment. They could only say, "Who knoweth?" The message which Jonah brought to them spoke only of impending judgment. In the cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," there seemed to be only the sound of wrath. But while there was nothing in the message itself, there were yet several things which encouraged them to hope.

One was *the merciful character of God.* Mankind universally seem to have some belief in the Divine mercy, as they everywhere in their times of sore trouble and distress appeal to it. Several things may have contributed to bring about this general belief, such as the idea that God, like man, is amenable to humble confession and earnest entreaty, a vague tradition of the primeval revelation of mercy, and an observation of the Divine goodness in providence. Perhaps in the case of the Assyrians this general belief was strengthened by the fame of His merciful dealings with His own

chosen people Israel. The Canaanites in the days of Joshua were familiar with the wonders which God had wrought for the children of Israel in the land of Egypt (Josh. ii. 9-11; ix. 9, 10); and it seems extremely probable that the Assyrians were equally familiar with God's merciful dealings towards a people that had often rebelled against Him. And a belief in His mercifulness would incline them to hope.

Another is *the mission of Jonah itself.* The great God, the God who had made the sea and the dry land, had sent His prophet from the land of Israel to their remote city of Nineveh—a distance of several hundred miles—to warn them of their impending doom; and they would naturally ask themselves the question, Why has He taken so much trouble to do so? The idea that He had done it merely to increase their misery would hardly, on account of its cruelty, commend itself to their judgment: it would appear more in harmony with His character that He had done it with a gracious design.

And another is, *God's wonderful dealing with Jonah in connection with his mission to Nineveh.* God's earnestness is seen both in His punishment of Jonah for refusing to go to Nineveh, and in His preservation of Him in the belly of a great fish.

His wrath in punishing Jonah for not going to Nineveh, and his mercy in preserving Him that he might go, both showed that the mission to Nineveh was a matter of great moment in the estimation of God. Such painstaking to warn them seemed to imply a gracious design, and was fitted to embolden the king and his nobles to hope and encourage the people to hope that, if they truly humbled themselves and repented, the great God might relent and not overthrow the city. They nobly resolved to act on a mere peradventure. Though they could only say, Who knoweth? as they had no expressed promise from God, such as the Jews had, yet they would do their utmost to obtain the Divine favour, and so they enjoined the people of Nineveh to humiliation and prayer and practical reformation.

And their action resulted in *complete success.* V. 10, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which He said He would do them: and He did it not." The thing mentioned as specially regarded by God is *their turning from their evil way.* God saw no doubt all that they did, their fasting and wearing of sackcloth, their earnest entreaties for the averting of the overthrow, their covering the domestic animals with sackcloth, and their withholding from

them food and water, so as to make them cry mightily for relief; but if there had been nothing more than these external signs of mourning and humiliation, the eye of God would have seen nothing to delight in, and His ear would have been deaf to the cries both of the people and the domestic animals. Such works are only pleasing to Him when they are the outcome and evidence of a truly humble and contrite heart. In themselves they are beautiful and becoming forms; but, when they are assumed by those whose hearts are still set upon doing evil, they become an abomination in the sight of God. But the repentance of Nineveh was genuine. The men of Nineveh proved the sincerity of their mourning and humiliation for their sins by abandoning the sins themselves. "They turned from their evil way"; they began to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with the God of heaven; and such works are always acceptable to the Most High. As the prophet says: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Is. lv. 7).

As the Ninevites were successful in their appeal, and God did not overthrow the city as He had

threatened, he is on that account *said to repent:* "And God *repented* of the evil which He said He would do unto them, and he did it not." The same thing is ascribed to God in many other passages of Scripture. He is represented as saying in reference to the destruction of the old world: "For it *repenteth* me that I have made them" (Gen. vi. 7). He had created them for the enjoyment of life on the face of the earth, but for their heinous sins He was bent on sweeping them away with a deluge of waters. His love and delight were transformed into hatred and grief. Again, God threatened to destroy the children of Israel for worshipping the golden calf at Mount Sinai. He said to Moses: "Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Ex. xxxii. 10); but through the intercession of Moses the Lord relented: "and the Lord *repented* of the evil which He said He would do unto His people" (Ex. xxxii. 14). Again, in reference to the rejection of Saul, the Lord said to Samuel, "It *repenteth* me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments" (1 Sam. xv. 2).

But while in these and other passages the Lord

is said to repent, He is declared in others to be *incapable of repentance.* Balaam under Divine inspiration exclaimed, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the Son of Man, that He should repent: Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numb. xxiii. 19). When Saul sought of Samuel the removal of the Divine rejection, the prophet, in declaring that it was irrevocable, said to Him: "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man that He should repent" (1 Sam. xv. 29). And God Himself says to His people: "I, the Lord, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6).

There is, however, no contradiction, but the most perfect harmony between the two sets of passages. God is unchangeable in His character and in the principles of His government. He always acts, and cannot but act, in a manner worthy of Himself. He is without variableness or shadow of turning. And, on the other hand, just because He is unchangeable, He varies in His attitude towards the variable children of men. Had the Ninevites continued impenitent, their city, as God had threatened, would have been overthrown in forty days; but as they had repented, God also repented or

changed His purpose of destruction into a purpose of mercy. His very repentance in their case is an illustration of His unchangeableness, and His incapability of relenting in the common sense of the word.

The historical truth of Nineveh's repentance has been called in question, both on account of its extraordinary character, and because no trace of it has been found in the Assyrian monuments. The extraordinary character of the event is readily admitted. The suddenness and thorough repenttance of such a great city at the preaching of a foreign prophet is something unique in the history of the world; but, though a most extraordinary event, there are several things which, when taken together, go to establish its credibility. One is, *the deep religiousness of the Assyrian people.* Though cruel and unjust, they were eminently reverent towards the gods whom they worshipped, as is seen from the inscriptions on the monuments. Another is, *the readiness of Eastern nations to pay deference to the oracular sayings of foreigners.* According to Herodotus, Crœsus, the famous king of Lydia, consulted several oracles in Greece and one in Lybia in Africa (B. I. 46); Pharaoh in Egypt consulted and honoured Joseph, an Hebrew (Gen. xli.); Balak, the king of Moab, sent to Pethor by the Euphrates

for Balaam, who was a Midianite, to curse Israel (Numb. xxii. 5); Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, sent Hazael to consult Elisha about his sickness (2 Kings viii. 8); and it was out of regard for the prediction of Jeremiah that Cyrus permitted the captive Jews in Babylon to return to their own land and build the temple at Jerusalem (Ezra i. 1). It was therefore not surprising that the Ninevites should give reverent heed to Jonah. Another is, *the excitability of the Oriental races.* "It was not necessary to the effect of Jonah's preaching," says Layard, "that he should be of the religion of the people of Nineveh. I have known a Christian priest frighten a whole Mussulman town to tears and repentance, by publicly proclaiming that he had received a Divine mission to announce a coming earthquake or plague" ("Nineveh and Babylon," p. 632). And most important of all is, *Jonah's wonderful experience.* He was a sign to the Ninevites of the terrible might of the Divine wrath, as well as of the marvellous resources of the Divine mercy. He had for their sakes been cast into the deep, and after three days been restored to the land. He had come to them not only as a prophet of the Lord, well known perhaps from his past career, but as one who had become for their sakes an object-lesson of the Divine wrath and the

Divine mercy; and the exhibition in his personal experience must have added much weight and impressiveness to his message, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Such a message from the lips of such a messenger was likely to stir a community like that of Nineveh to its very depths. However extraordinary, the repentance of Nineveh in the circumstances is not incredible.

The objection that no trace of this extraordinary event has been found in the Assyrian records seems to have no weight. First of all, it is *not likely that the Ninevites would take pains to keep their humiliation in remembrance.* It is not natural for men to glory in their humiliation. So long as the Ninevites were deeply penitent, their thoughts would flow in other channels than in commemorating the event by some enduring monument; and when the repentance ebbed, and they began to return to their former course of life, they would dislike to be reminded of it. In the second place, *the repentance of Nineveh would be abhorrent to the rest of the empire.* The abandonment of aggressive and predatory courses on the part of the capital could not but be most offensive to the nation at large which gloried in them; and in this very repentance of Nineveh we have probably the main

cause of the revolt of Assur and other cities against the reigning power, which took place about this time. There is nothing in history or in the event itself to lead us to doubt the truth of the sacred narrative. Besides, we have the authority of our Lord for believing in its historic truth. He manifestly referred to it as a fact, when he said to the Jews: "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for *they repented at the preaching of Jonah;* and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (Matt. xii. 41). The comparison, in order to be cogent, implies that the repentance of the Ninevites was real, and not imaginary.

The repentance of the men of Nineveh is an important event, not only in itself, but also as *a symbol or shadow of what was to take place in Messianic times.* As a rule God permitted the Gentile world in ancient times to go on unchecked in its self-chosen way. Paul refers to this both in his speech to the men of Lystra and in his speech to the men of Athens (Acts xiv. 16; xvii. 30). In the one he speaks of God, "who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways," and in the other he says, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere

repent." But the mission of Jonah, which was an exception to the general rule, was not only a proof of God's love for the Gentiles, but a prophecy of what the Greater than Jonah would do in the fulness of the time. He, who was to be the Glory of His people Israel, was also to be a Light for revelation to the Gentiles (Luke ii. 32). He was to be a prophet to the Gentiles, not during His earthly ministry, but after His resurrection from the dead on the third day. His ministry at the first, like that of Jonah, was confined to that of the chosen people; but after He had endured the wrath of God, and through the Divine mercy had risen from the dead on the third day, His mission to the Gentiles soon afterwards began. He did not indeed go in His own person, but in the person of His disciples. He said to them before He ascended: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

CHAPTER XI.

THE DISCONTENT OF JONAH.

(Chap. IV. 1-5.)

"The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
Though justice be thy plan, consider this—
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy."— *Shakespeare.*

THE deep and universal repentance of Nineveh was pleasing to the Most High. "And God saw their work, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, which He said He would do unto them; and He did it not." It produced upon Jonah, however, a strikingly oppo-

site effect. "But," says the sacred biographer, "it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry (or grieved)." Manifestly the prophet would have been highly delighted with the impenitence and destruction of the great Assyrian capital. The contrast between the bearing of Jesus towards the doomed city of Jerusalem and that of Jonah towards the doomed city of Nineveh is startling and suggestive. While the One was tenderly merciful, the other was cruelly unmerciful. As Jonah was naturally, I think, not hard-hearted, but a man of loving gentleness and exquisite sensibility, the contrast lends force to the becomingness of David's prayer: "I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord: for very great are His mercies: and let me not fall into the hand of man" (1 Chron. xxi. 13).

It is the common opinion that the discontent of Jonah, spoken of in the first verse of the fourth chapter, was felt and expressed after the lapse of forty days. The prophet had been instructed to cry in the streets of the great city: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown"; and, according to the common opinion, it was because the forty days had passed without anything being done to the city, that Jonah was so displeased. There are two things, however, which lead me to think that

his discontent took place shortly after the first day's preaching.

One is, *the unlikelihood that Jonah remained in the city till after the expiry of the forty days.* The prophet was *in the city* at the time of his displeasure, for we read in the fifth verse, "Then Jonah went out of the city." Some indeed have rendered the word by a pluperfect *had gone*, and would thus make the displeasure subsequent to the departure; but this translation seems to do violence to the natural flow of the narrative. The rendering of the word in the past, *went*, which is the rendering both of the Common and the Revised Versions, seems to be correct. But, if Jonah was in the city when he was exceedingly displeased, the likelihood is that his discontent took place *before*, and not after, the forty days. The opinion that he remained in a city, which he knew to be doomed, is contrary both to nature and to duty. The reason alleged by Keil and Delitzsch in its support seems to be without weight. They say in their Commentary on the passage: "Jonah had no reason to be afraid of perishing within the city. If he had faith, which we cannot deny, he could rely upon it that God would not order him, His own servant, to perish with the ungodly, but when the proper time arrived, would direct him to leave the city." These words

are only valid on the supposition that God had instructed Jonah to remain within the city, for which we have no proof; with such a command Jonah would no doubt have exercised faith in the Divine preserving care; but to abide in it without instruction, and at the same time to expect that God would warn him before the catastrophe, would be to act rashly and presumptuously. The warning that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days made it dutiful for Jonah to depart from it and escape its doom. As a Hebrew, too, he would naturally wish to separate himself from the doomed Gentile city.

The other thing which induces the belief that Jonah went out of the city shortly after the first day's preaching is, *that he went out, and sat on the east side of the city, till he might see what would become of the city* (v. 5). This, no doubt, is generally understood as referring to the future of Nineveh after the forty days. Though God had not, as He had said, overthrown the city at the end of forty days, still Jonah cherished the hope that He might still destroy it. This opinion may be possible; but the remission of the threatened doom in its original form and the remarkable repentance of the city seem to make it extremely improbable that Jonah could then entertain any such hope. It seems much

more likely that his expectation belonged to the period of the forty days, the revealed period of probation. The cause of Jonah's exceeding displeasure and grief was, not the certain knowledge either by revelation or from the event that God *had* relented, but the overpowering conviction from the sight of Nineveh's repentance that He *would* relent. Still, as the forty days had not yet expired, he would continue to hope against hope.

Jonah's grief and displeasure found vent in *a complaint to God.* We read in the second and third verse: "And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray Thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish: for I know that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth Thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

Two things help to soften the harshness of this presumptuously bold and rash complaint. One is, that it was *made to God Himself.* Though profoundly displeased with the course of events, he neither complains of God to others, nor cherishes in his own bosom a spirit of silent and sullen murmuring against God. His love keeps him from

both these forms of insubordination, and leads him to pour out his complaint into the ear of God Himself. Those who can rail against their friends to others, or indulge in solitary murmuring against them, love them less than those who make their complaints only to the friends themselves. Their earnest personal dealing with them in the matter is a fruit and evidence of love. And of all kinds of murmuring against God, that of directly addressing it to God is the most childlike, and becoming, and most likely to issue in good. It is the most likely to ease the burdened heart, and secure the gentle and soothing treatment of the All-Wise and the Most Merciful One. The other is, that *he prefaces his complaint with a word of humble entreaty.* He begins by saying, "I pray Thee, O Lord." It is the reverent, submissive beseeching of a fractious child. He entreats the Lord to condescend to listen to the plaint of his perplexed and sorely afflicted heart. And if we keep these two things in mind, his direct appeal to God and his reverent submissiveness of spirit, the complaint itself will not grate so harshly on our sense of propriety.

The burden of his complaint is, that *things at Nineveh had fallen out according to his expressed and dreaded anticipation.* "Was not this my saying when I was yet in my country?" Though the

saying itself is not given, the gist of it is evident. When the word of the Lord came to Jonah at the first in his own country, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me," he dreaded that his mission would awaken the Ninevites to repentance, and thus lead God to avert His threatened judgments. The very thing which he dreaded was the success of his mission; and he not only dreaded it, but he expressed his fears to the Lord. In his estimation it would be a great and overwhelming calamity. Hence his remarkable success in preaching to the men of Nineveh, which ought to have filled him with the utmost satisfaction and delight, displeased and grieved him exceedingly; and, in the tumultuous swellings of his grieved and disappointed heart, he took upon him to remind the Lord of what he had formerly said, as if the Lord had been blameworthy in not giving heed to it. It was a complaint of arrogant presumption. He had told the Lord what he dreaded, and yet the Lord by His action had brought it about: this to Jonah was a grave offence. The short-sighted and narrow-hearted prophet imagined that the infinitely wise and boundlessly-loving Jehovah ought to have shaped His course according to his mind. It is easy and right, no doubt, to blame Jonah for his

unreasonable and presumptuous complaint; but in judging him let us remember, not only that he uttered it in a time of bitter grief and disappointment, but also that we ourselves have sometimes, in our own times of trouble and distress, been guilty of murmuring against Divine providence. Jonah is not singular in presuming to judge unfavourably the action of the Most High. Nothing indeed is more common. Hence in our appreciation of Jonah we shall do well to give heed to the exhortatation of our Lord: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. vii. 1, 2).

Jonah in his prayer next states that *this saying was the cause of his flight:* "Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish." It is noticeable that Jonah utters no regret for having done so; and its absence indicates a disordered and defective spirit. Still it would be too much to say that he seeks to justify his rebellion. He had been sorely punished for his flight, and when he uttered his prayer in the belly of the great fish, he had been truly contrite for his disobedience: and if he had been questioned now, he would, I have no doubt, have acknowledged that he had done wrong. He would be ready to say with Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice,

and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xv. 22). But there seems to be little doubt that he sought to extenuate his guilt. He fled to Tarshish to avoid bringing about the evil which he dreaded. It was because he looked upon the sparing of Nineveh as the greatest of calamities that he disobeyed in order to avert it. He did evil that good might come. And he boldly tells God that this was the cause of his disobedience, because in his estimation the sparing of Nineveh was still an overwhelming calamity.

Jonah next gives the reason *why he dreaded the result of such a mission:* "For I know that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth Thee of the evil." It is worthy of note that the prophet Joel describes the character of God in precisely the same words. We read in his prophecies: "yet even now, saith the Lord, turn ye unto Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with moaning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for *He is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth Him of the evil*" (Joel ii. 12, 13). Either prophet might well be the author of the description, as all the elements of it are to be found in previous revelations. In the

name which the Lord made known to Moses at Mount Sinai, He declares Himself to be *gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy* (Ex. xxxiv. 6); and the remaining part of the description, "and repenteth Thee of the evil," occurs in many previous scriptures (Ex. xxxii. 12, 14; Judges ii. 18; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16).

As the description of the Divine character in both prophets is a combination of the same elements, the likelihood is that one of the two borrowed from the other; but which of the two it was, seeing that the two prophets were for a time contemporaries, it seems impossible to say with certainty. On the whole, I am inclined to think that Jonah was the author of the description and Joel the borrower. For one thing Jonah was *the earlier prophet*, and the later was more likely to borrow from the earlier than the earlier from the later. Again, the declaration *I knew* is more suggestive of prolonged study and experience than of the remembrance of a fresh revelation. Jonah *knew* that the Lord was "rich in mercy and ready to forgive." He knew it not only from the outstanding proclamation of His name to Moses on Mount Sinai, but also from the many exhibitions of His tender mercy and forgiveness towards His stiff-necked and rebellious people. The truth was written large and emblazoned in

their national history ; and it was deeply embedded in the mind and impressed on the heart of the susceptible prophet. It was the vivid realisation of this truth which made him dread that, if he went to Nineveh and warned them of the wrath of God for their sins, the inhabitants might repent and become the objects of His sparing mercy ; and the thought of such a result was so revolting that, instead of arising to go to Nineveh, Jonah arose to flee unto Tarshish. His very flight to that distant region is a striking proof of Jonah's profound sense of the Divine forgivingness.

And then we have *the conclusion of his prayer*. V. 3, " Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me ; for it is better for me to die than to live." The request of Jonah is similar to that of Elijah. The great reformer had to flee for his life from the face of Jezebel, the queen and wife of Ahab. He had nobly and successfully vindicated the cause of Jehovah on Mount Carmel, and had slain all the prophets of Baal at the Brook Kishon. To all appearance the Israelitish nation with king Ahab at their head had returned to the worship of Jehovah. But when Jezebel, who was all powerful at court, heard of what had been done, she sent this message to Elijah : " So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one

of them by to-morrow about this time." As the cause of God seemed to be lost, the disappointed and worn-out prophet, whose mournful refrain was, "I, even I, only am left, and they seek my life to take it away," fled southwards into the wilderness of Beersheba; and there, as he sat under a juniper tree, he prayed: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings xix. 4).

But, while the prayers are similar, *the causes of them are very different.* The cause of Jonah's prayer was the sparing of Nineveh, while the cause of Elijah's prayer was the seeming failure of the worship of Jehovah in Israel. The one cause of hopelessness was a luminous illustration of the Divine mercy, and the other an obscuring, to all appearance a total eclipse, of the Divine glory in the land. The hopelessness of Jonah has cast a dark shadow of unmercifulness around his character and fame, while that of Elijah has thrown around him a halo of nobility and brought him nearer to the hearts of men.

There are two things in the conclusion of Jonah's prayer worthy of notice. One is, *his judgment as to the value of life:* "It is better for me to die than to live." So too thought Elijah in the wilderness of Beersheba. So have thought multitudes in every

age during the dark night of adversity. As they see no star of hope in their sky, they conclude that all brightness for them is clean gone for ever, and that life for them is not worth living. This is but the hasty judgment of sense. It was evidently so in the case of Jonah and Elijah, as both had before them a future course of usefulness. If Jonah afterwards wrote this book, as I believe he did, he had still perhaps the greatest work of his life to do. And in multitudes of other cases the unbroken gloom of the present has been followed by a period of much sunshine and prosperity. In the evening time for them it has been light. No one, however dark and dismal their surroundings, has a right to conclude that it is better for them to die than to live. The fact that God preserves them in life is a proof that it is not so.

The other is, *his request:* "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me." Though life to Jonah was bereft of hope and gladness, he refrains from doing anything to cut it short. There are many in every age, and in no age more than in our own, who, when they are involved in seemingly inextricable difficulties or afflicted with sore trouble and distress, lay violent hands on their own life. Having concluded that it is better for them to die than to live, they act upon

this conviction and extinguish the spark of life. But Jonah, instead of doing so, entreats the Lord, the Giver of life, to take it away. He recognises the sacredness of life and the duty of self-preservation, and reveals a spirit of submission to the Divine will. His despair was mingled with piety.

As the sparing of Nineveh was the cause of the exceeding displeasure and grief of Jonah and the inspiration of the prayer that God would take away his life, one naturally asks, *Why should the sparing of Nineveh so profoundly affect the prophet?* As we have fully considered the various answers to this question in a former chapter on Jonah's flight, I shall here confine myself to a restating of what seems to be the true answer. The true explanation is to be found in *the patriotism of the prophet.* Jonah dreaded Nineveh as a great conquering power which was likely to oppress his country, and which actually in the course of little more than forty years destroyed their national existence and carried them into captivity. He wished Nineveh overthrown, because he wished the greatest danger to his own country taken out of the way; and it was because he saw in the sparing of Nineveh the coming doom of his own country, that he regarded the Divine relenting with the bitterest grief and displeasure, and prayed that God might take away

his life. There is nothing mean or ignoble in such a spirit. Though not magnanimous, it is intensely patriotic. His longing for the destruction of the great city, and his prayer for death because it had been spared, were due, not to a cruel and peevish disposition, but to a soul aglow with an overmastering love for his own people. His error lay in making too much, not of himself, but of his country; and such an error, though not to be commended, bespeaks an inherently noble and unselfish nature. The man who could love his country so dearly that life for him had lost its charm, because the sun of its prosperity and glory was about to set, is not a man to be ridiculed and despised, but to be held in respectful admiration.

After Jonah had poured out his complaint, perhaps in the night-watches after the first day's preaching, the Lord said to him, "*Doest thou well to be angry (or grieved)?*" Strong emotion is apt to be unreflective. Great passions, like mighty torrents, rush on with resistless force, carrying everything before them. For the time being men are not masters of themselves. Hence the Lord, who knows our frame, deals gently with the prophet in his overwhelming grief, and merely asks him to pause and reflect. He does not upbraid him for his sorrow, but simply bids him consider its

justness and propriety. His words, "Doest thou well to be angry?" would fall upon the spirit of Jonah like oil upon the troubled waters; they would have an arresting and calming influence. And what the Lord said to Jonah, he says to all who are mourning and complaining under the dispensations of His providence. He would have them all pause and consider the justness and propriety of their complaint. He says to them, Doest thou well to be angry? May not the things complained of, duly considered, fill you with joy rather than sorrow, with praise rather than blame? To listen to the Divine voice, which is eminently rational and becoming, is the first step towards mental recovery and peace.

But Jonah made no reply. He was manifestly not prepared to say either Yes or No. His silence was at least a hopeful sign. It showed that his murmuring was arrested, and that he had begun to reflect. The Divine question was intended to suggest to Jonah that he was wrong in being so grieved; and the silence of the prophet may be fairly regarded as acquiescence in that suggestion; but he seems to have misunderstood the real point of the Divine enquiry. The Lord referred to his being grieved at the sparing of Nineveh, while Jonah seems to have thought that it lay in

his grieving on that account before the expiry of the forty days. When Jonah saw the repentance of Nineveh, so deep and universal, he was inwardly convinced from the merciful character of God that the Lord would repent Him of the evil, and so he began to be exceedingly displeased and grieved, as if the sparing of Nineveh were already an accomplished fact. But, as the forty days were not yet expired, there was still the possibility that God might overthrow the city; and when the Lord said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry? he seems to have understood it as referring to his undue haste in grieving. The repentance of Nineveh, which had made such a powerful impression on himself, might not be so satisfactory in the estimation of the Lord, who sees not as man, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). He was therefore emboldened to hope; and so, we are told, "Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city."

His departure from the city may have taken place in the early morning of the next day after the first day's preaching. As a Hebrew who dreaded the Assyrians as the enemies of his

country, and as the worshippers of false gods, and who looked upon them as lying under the impending doom of Heaven, he would be naturally eager to separate himself from them, and shake off the dust of the city from his feet. His course lay to the east, partly, perhaps, because he was nearest that side of the city, but mainly because there were mountains or high lands in that direction. There he could get most easily a safe and suitable post of observation; and, on his reaching the elevated ground, he set about making for himself a booth to dwell in, and to shelter him from the burning heat of an Assyrian sun. This task, as engaging his mind and withdrawing it from brooding over the sparing of the city, would have a beneficial effect on the spirits of the prophet.

The making of booths, or huts of interlaced branches of trees, was a familiar occupation with the Israelites. Their great ancestor, Jacob, when he returned to Caanan after his long sojourn in Padan-aram, made booths for his cattle in the valley of the Jordan; and from that fact the place was called Succoth, or Booths (Gen. xxxiii. 17). His descendants, in commemorating their dwelling in booths during their forty years' wanderings in the wilderness, were required every year at the Feast of Tabernacles to make booths for

themselves and dwell in them" (Lev. xxiii. 39-43; Neh. viii. 14-17). As Jonah was probably familiar with the making of booths in his own land, he would find no difficulty in constructing one for himself on the elevated ground to the east of Nineveh. And such a dwelling on these uplands was very needful for the comfort of the prophet. "Few European travellers," says Layard in "Nineveh and Babylon," can brave the perpendicular rays of an Assyrian sun. Even the well-seasoned Arabs seek the shade during the day, and journey by night, unless driven forth at noon-tide by necessity, or the love of war."

After making his booth Jonah sat down under its shadow, and watched to see what might happen to the great city, which lay beneath him, with its splendid palaces and enormous wealth, its numerous inhabitants and much cattle. He probably expected that Nineveh would be overthrown after the manner of Sodom and Gomorrha. The destruction of the city was, perhaps, the abiding object of his thought and desire from morning to evening, and from day to day. His eye was directed to the city, the first thing in the morning and the last in the evening. Jesus wept over the coming doom of Jerusalem; but Jonah was ready to rejoice over the doom of the great Assyrian capital.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DIVINE SCHOOLING OF JONAH.

(Chap. IV. 6-11.)

"It is God; His love looks mighty,
But is mightier than it seems:
'Tis our Father! and His fondness
Goes far out beyond our dreams.
There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.
But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify our strictness
With a zeal He will not own.—*Faber.*

AFTER leaving Nineveh, perhaps on the day following his first day's preaching, Jonah dwelt on the high lands, to the east of the city, in

the booth which he had made for himself. Beneath him lay the city in the plain, engirdled with rivers on all sides but the east; and as he looked day by day on its vast size and formidable walls and towers, his sense of its greatness and his desire for its overthrow increased. The question of the Lord in Nineveh, Doest thou well to be grieved? had led him to think that he might be wrong in concluding, as he had done, from the repentance of the Ninevites, that the Lord would indeed spare the city. The repentance of the king and his people might not be so satisfactory in reality as in appearance; and as he hoped that the Lord would in due time overthrow the city, he waited in his elevated post to see what would befall it. Two things, however, had a most depressing effect on the expectant prophet.

One was *the enervating heat of the Assyrian sun.* For some days the leafy branches, of which his booth was constructed, might keep him comparatively cool; but as the leaves by and bye were shrivelled up by the heat, and the burning rays shot through the bare and withered branches, the prophet under its shade would become faint in spirit and ready to despond. Lassitude of body tends to mental depression. The other, probably the more powerful of the two, was *the tumultuous*

sound of mourning and supplication which reached him from the great city. He would readily hear from the overlooking height the pitiful cries of the much cattle, deprived of their customary food and water, and the bitter wailings and earnest beseechings of the penitent inhabitants; and as this great volume of heart-rending sound struck upon his ear day by day, and every day with increasing intensity, the hope that God would overthrow the city would grow less and less. His one hope lay in the worthlessness of its repentance, and every day impressed him the more with its genuineness and depth; and as he knew that "the Lord was a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repented Him of the evil," he began to fear with a growing dread that the Lord would spare the city to be a standing menace to his own country. And as the result of these two causes, the prophet was in a sad state of physical and mental prostration.

It was when Jonah was in this doleful condition, that the Lord gave him an extraordinary mark of His goodwill. We read, v. 6, "And the Lord prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his evil case." The sacred historian uses the same word in relation to the gourd that he does

in relation to the great fish which swallowed Jonah. Both were *prepared* of the Lord. Both were chosen and fitted, and made to do service to the prophet, the one to preserve him from the choking sea, and the other from the sweltering heat. Both were extraordinary illustrations of what God is continually doing in the dispensation of His providence. All helpers of His people in every day life are prepared of the Lord as truly as the great fish and the gourd. The miraculous elements in these two cases only make the general comforting truth more conspicuous and impressive.

It is noteworthy that, while *the Lord* is said to prepare the great fish, *the Lord God* is said to prepare the gourd. These different names were perhaps intended to express a difference in the writer's conception of the two Divine acts. He used the name Lord or Jehovah, the name of God peculiar to the chosen people, in reference to the great fish, probably because its preparation had mainly a reference to the preservation of Jonah as one of the chosen people. The prophet prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord in this way answered his prayer. It was therefore natural for the author to write, "And the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah." But the preparation of the gourd, while it no doubt affected Jonah, pointed mainly to the Ninevites.

It was mainly in their interests that it was produced. And the writer probably intended to suggest this difference by stating that "*the Lord God* prepared a gourd," thus combining Israel's peculiar name for God with the general name for God amongst the Gentiles. As the act was mainly general in its aim, the general name of God, *Elohim*, is also employed.

The plant, which the Hebrew word *Kikayon* was intended to denote, has long been a matter in dispute. The prevailing view in recent times has been that it was the Palma Christi or castor-oil tree—a shrub with large leaves extremely common in eastern lands. The main ground of this opinion is the supposed derivation of the Hebrew word Kikayon from the Egyptian name of the castor-oil tree, viz., *Kiki;* and as this is the only feasible derivation of the Hebrew word, the ground is felt to be strong. This plant, too, is one of rapid growth. Pusey, who adopts this view, says: "The growth and occasional perishing of the Palma Christi have something analogous to the growth and decay related in Jonah. Its rapidity of growth is remarked by Jerome and Pliny, who says, "In Spain it shoots up rapidly, of the height of an olive, with hollow stem and branches" (Introduction to Jonah).

The ancient opinion of Augustine, that the *kikayon* was a gourd, seems, however, more probable. The gourd, which is called *the bottle-gourd*, because its fruit when emptied of the seeds are used as bottles, *suits the circumstances of the narrative much better than the Palma Christi.* The writer of the article "Gourd" in the last edition of "Smith's Bible Dictionary," says, "No one who knows the plant (the Palma Christi) can conceive its casting shade over an existing arbour. But this is exactly what the gourd would do. . . . The tendrils of the gourd would seize the framework, and rapidly the plant with its large leaves would cover the whole arbour." The same view is held by the writer of the article "Gourd" in Dr Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible." Another reason in support of this opinion is, *the fact that the gourd is used to afford a shelter while the Palma Christi is not.* The writer on the "Gourd" in "Smith's Bible Dictionary" says, "The Palma Christi is not a tree used for shade, being of a straggling growth, though a man might creep for shelter underneath it;" and, "In all warm climates the gourd is used for shade and for covering trellis-work. So rapid is its natural growth, that it is commonly said to grow an inch in an hour. In the gardens about Sidon and Damascus, the present writer has seen many a

trellised gourd shading a summer-house." We are therefore inclined to think that the *kikayon*, which God prepared for the sheltering of Jonah, was, not the Palma Christi, as so many scholars have maintained, but a gourd, probably the bottle-gourd.

The growth of the gourd, which sheltered Jonah in the booth, seems to have been miraculous. Though its natural growth is rapid, the gourd in the most favourable circumstances, left to itself, could hardly have sprung up, and overshadowed the booth in a single night. Its remarkable growth seems to have been due to the hastening agency of the Most High. Such a proof of the Divine working would impress more vividly the mind of Jonah with a sense of the Divine care. And so, when Jonah in the morning found that his naked booth was covered with broad green leaves, "he was exceeding glad because of the gourd." He, who but a little before was *displeased exceedingly*, is now *exceeding glad*. There is a natural touch of truth in the description. Both expressions reveal the same keenness of sensibility.

The exceeding gladness of Jonah because of the gourd was not solely due to mere bodily relief from the burning heat. The shadow of the gourd in his exposed situation to an Assyrian sun could not but be grateful to any man, and especially to a poet of

such exquisite sensibilities as the prophet. But two other things probably contributed to his exuberant joy. One was the belief that the gourd was *the gift of the Divine goodness.* Jonah could hardly fail to see in its unexpected presence, and supernatural growth, the good hand of the Lord; and while the gift in itself was highly pleasurable, the sense of the Divine goodness would enhance the pleasure of the gift. The other was the thought that the gourd was *given to encourage him in waiting for the overthrow of the great city.* He probably interpreted the favourable providence, as men in general are prone to do, in the line of his own desires.

As he sat that day in his well-covered booth and looked down on the penitent city, the prophet was in the highest possible good spirits. His sky seemed to be without a cloud. He anticipated the speedy overthrow of Nineveh and a bright career of prosperity for his own land. It was one of the happiest days of his life, the happiest by far which he had spent since he had set out for Nineveh from his native land. "But," says the sacred historian, "God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind;

and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live."

He who prepared the gourd, prepared also the instruments of its destruction. He who is the author of life and prosperity, has created also the waster to destroy. The instruments of destruction to the gourd were the worm in the first place, and then a sultry east wind. There does not seem to be any necessity for taking the worm in a collective sense, as one might be sufficient for the destruction of the gourd. "The gnawing of its bark by a snail," says the writer of the article "Gourd," in "Smith's Bible Dictionary," "will shrivel every leaf and leave the fruit hanging from the naked footstalk, a type of desolation." The "worm that God prepared might be one of those snails, which could bark and then destroy the whole plant instantaneously." It seems doubtful if the Hebrew word can be applied to a *snail;* but, however one may understand the word, and it is now perhaps impossible to say what the particular creature was, it seems obvious that one gnawing "worm" would be equal to the task of destroying the plant.

As the gourd is described as having *perished in a*

night, the little creature, while Jonah was asleep, and perhaps dreaming pleasant dreams, seems to have been busy in gnawing its way into the heart of the stem, and to have completed its work *when the morning rose the next day*. There can be no doubt that Jonah was expecting many pleasant days under the shelter of the gourd; and, as God had so wonderfully prepared it for him, there was nothing unreasonable in his cherishing such an expectation; and yet, after his first day's happy experience, while he was lying in unconscious slumber, the prepared agent of destruction was busy at work undermining his hopes. And as with the gourd, so it often is with the fair and promising forms of worldly prosperity. To the eye of the joyous possessor it may look strong and enduring, and under its shadow he may be congratulating himself on a long period of unbroken comfort and happiness, while, all the time unknown to him, there is a worm gnawing at its vitals. The fairest and the most promising worldly prosperity may, in the wonderful providence of God, be suddenly and unexpectedly destroyed. It is not like a strong and enduring mountain, but like the frail and perishable gourd.

But the work of destruction which had been begun by the worm, was completed by *a vehement or sultry east wind*. The worm seems to have punc-

tured or smitten the gourd at the dawn, so that it at once began to wither; the gourd had, as it were, received its death-wound; and when the sun arose the east wind, which God had prepared, began to play on it and hasten its destruction. The east wind, which came from the hot and sandy deserts of Arabia, was regarded by the Hebrews in Palestine with the greatest dread. On account of its destructive and relaxing nature it seems to have become a symbol of an instrument of destruction. The prophet Ezekiel says of the national existence of Judah, when it was relying upon Egypt for support, "Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the beds where it grew" (Ezek. xvi. 10). Possibly the east wind, which blew upon Jonah's gourd, is to be understood, not literally as actually coming from the east, but symbolically as a wind of the same character as the east wind with which the Hebrews were so familiar. Such a description, from whatever direction the wind might come, would convey the truth more vividly to the mind. At Nineveh the wind from the Arabian desert would be from the south; and Layard in his "Nineveh and Babylon" seems to refer to this wind, when he says: "It was the season of the Shergis, or burning winds from the

south, which occasionally swept over the country, driving in their short-lived fury everything before them. We all went below ground soon after the sun had risen, and remained there in the tunnels without again seeking the open air until it was far down the western horizon." But there seem to be also burning winds from the east. In his work on "Koordistan," a province which lies at no great distance to the east of Nineveh, Rich says, as quoted by Pusey, "Just as the moon rose about ten, an intolerable puff of wind came from the north-east. All were immediately silent, as if they had felt an earthquake, and then exclaimed in a dismal tone, 'The Sherki is come.' This was indeed the so much dreaded Sherki, and it has continued blowing ever since with great violence from the east and north-east, the wind being heated like our Bagdad Saum, but I think softer and more relaxing. This wind is the terror of these parts." The east wind then, which blew upon the gourd, might be literally from the east.

This wind is described as *vehement* in the Common Version, and as *sultry* in the Revised Version. From the above and other observations of travellers, we know that the east wind is always sultry, and sometimes vehement; and so in this case it may have been both vehement and

sultry, although the idea of *sultriness* seems to be the one intended to be conveyed by the word. The oppressive heat of this burning wind would very speedily shrivel up the withering leaves of the gourd, and complete the work of desolation which the "worm" had begun; and, as the booth was now completely stripped of its once grateful covering, the sun's rays beat with unbroken power on the defenceless head of Jonah. The condition of the prophet was now pitiable in the extreme. He had to suffer not only from the suffocating breath of the wind, but also from the overpowering heat of the Assyrian sun; and under their combined action "he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live."

There is something startling in the greatness and suddenness of the change which Jonah underwent, from the exceeding gladness of one day to the exceeding gloom of the next. Yesterday for him was full of light and hope, but to-day is full of darkness and despair. Much of this change was no doubt due to his physical condition. Things are seen very differently in a time of exuberant health and prosperity from what they are in a time of depressing sickness and adversity. The state of our bodies colours the objects we contemplate.

But much of it was also due to the disappointment of his hopes. The gift of this wonderful gourd with its refreshing shade had inspired him with the confident expectation that the Lord was about to overthrow Nineveh; the rushing up of his confidence was almost as rapid as that of the gourd: but, when the gourd was destroyed, the hope which sprang from it was involved in the same ruin. As he sat in the shelterless booth suffering from the pitiless heat, he saw in this crushing misfortune the sparing of the great city and the future overthrow of his country. The outlook was so dark that death seemed to him more desirable than life; and so he requested God in the darkness and bitterness of his grief to let him die. He was now ready to say of his life, "Ichabod," the glory is departed. He would rather die than see the disgrace and ruin of his own land.

In reply to his request for death, God said to Jonah, "Doest thou well to be grieved for the gourd?" The gentleness of the remonstrance bespeaks the tender consideration of God. The Almighty Creator makes allowance for the miserable condition of his servant and his excessive love for his native land. Had Jonah been the cruel monster he is often represented to be, a man bent on the destruction of Nineveh merely because the

inhabitants were Gentiles, or because it would maintain or greaten his own reputation as a prophet, the God of the spirits of all flesh, instead of speaking to him in the gentle tones of loving rebuke, would rather have spoken to him in the stern tones of burning indignation. The gentle rebuke suggests, not atrocious wickedness, but human infirmity.

But, instead of remaining silent as on the former occasion, the greatly suffering and disappointed prophet petulantly replied: "I do well to be grieved, even unto death." Those who are sorely afflicted in body, or suffering from bitter disappointment, and especially those who are suffering from both, as Jonah was, are exceedingly apt to be rash and unreasonable in their speech, and ought to be leniently judged. The change In Jonah, from silence under the first gentle remonstrance, to hasty and reckless speech under the second, is very great, and can easily be understood from the widely different circumstances of the prophet. When God first said to him, Doest thou well to be grieved? Jonah was in the full vigour of health, while on the second occasion, he was suffering from intense physical exhaustion, due to the overpowering heat of the sun and the sultry east wind. Self-restraint, as every one knows, is

much more easy in the one case than in the other. Besides, Jonah was not so susceptible to hope in the one case as in the other. The repentance of Nineveh, which led him to believe that God would spare the great city, was on the first occasion but of recent date, and might prove ephemeral, while on the second occasion it had lasted for a considerable time, and given evident proofs of being genuine and sincere. There was less room, therefore, on the second occasion for hoping that the repentance of Nineveh might be unsatisfactory, and that God would still overthrow the city. And then we have to take into account the depressing effect of the destruction of the gourd. The exceeding gladness of Jonah because of the gourd was probably in part due to his seeing in it an indication that God would gratify his desire for the overthrow of the city; and if this were the case, the destruction of the gourd would naturally inspire him with the fear that God would spare it. His hasty and fractious words on the second occasion are thus in the circumstances easily explained.

In reply the Lord said to him, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot

discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle."

It is noticeable that, while the author on the one hand uses the general name of God, *Elohim*, or the Almighty One, in reference to the preparing of the gourd, the worm, and the sultry east wind, and in reference to the second remonstrance, he uses on the other hand the peculiar covenant name of Jehovah in reference to the first remonstrance and this closing personal appeal to the mind and heart of Jonah. The reason of this difference is probably to be found in this, that the author regarded the Divine action in the former cases as that of the universal Governor, and in the latter cases as that of the covenant God of Israel. In the one set of cases the Most High acted as the God of the whole earth, and in the other as the God of his chosen people. It was as the God of Israel that the Lord said to Jonah the first time, Doest thou well to be grieved? and afterwards addressed to him the beautiful and touching appeal with which the book closes. The author employs the name of God, not at random, as one at first sight is apt to suppose, but with the nicest discrimination.

The Divine argument is based on the admission of Jonah that he was grieved for the gourd on account of its destruction. The Lord said to him,

"Thou hast had pity on the gourd." When Jonah saw the goodly plant, which had given him such grateful shelter, beginning to wither, he was pained at heart, and would, if he could, have saved it from perishing. There might be something wrong in the intensity of his pity; but there was nothing wrong in the feeling of pity itself. Sympathy with the growing plant-life around us is a Divinely-inspired instinct, and a shadow of the tender love which dwells in the heart of God for every living thing. As Jonah claimed to have done well in grieving for the gourd even unto death, the Lord, instead of blaming him for the intensity of his grief, gives him the full benefit of his own contention. He assumes for the sake of argument that Jonah had done well in pitying the gourd. He virtually says to the prophet: "You acknowledge that you have pitied the gourd, and you think that in so acting you have done well. Be it so."

He then points out that the gourd, which Jonah had pitied, *had cost him nothing:* "For the which thou has not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night and perished in a night." Jonah had done nothing with a view to its planting. He did not need to put forth any effort either to get the seed or to dig and manure the soil where it was sown. Neither did he do anything with a view

to its growth. He had spent no time in watering it or shielding it from noxious influences. The reason why it had cost him nothing was the extraordinary rapidity of its growth; it came up in a night. The seed was in the soil near the booth unknown to Jonah, and planted there by God's own hand; and during the night, when Jonah was asleep, the invisible seed grew with such rapidity that in the morning it covered the booth with its broad green leaves. There was no opportunity given to Jonah for its culture. And after affording a cool and refreshing shade to the prophet for a day, the gourd perished through the action of the worm during the following night. The sultry east wind and the burning rays of the sun next day no doubt completed the work of destruction; but through the gnawing of the worm it virtually perished in the night. Still Jonah, although the gourd had grown up without his labour and care, pitied it, and would fain have rescued it from its premature decay.

After stating the case of Jonah in a way which could not but gain his assent, the Lord cogently says to the prophet: "And should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than sixteen thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and

also much cattle." There is something wonderful in the Great I Am condescending to reason with a frail and fallible mortal, as one man might reason with another. He places Himself as it were on the same platform, and desires to be judged on the same principles of equity. He deals with man as a reasonable being, and thus honours the understanding with which He has inspired him. There are two points in the argument, which go to show the vastly superior claims of the Lord to exercise pity, the one being the greatness of the Lord, and the other the greatness of the object pitied.

Take first *the greatness of the Lord.* Jonah had pity on the gourd, and should not *the Lord* have the right to pity the great city? Though a creature Jonah claimed to have the right to pity the gourd; but if a creature has the right, surely the Creator, who has implanted in man the principle of pity, and who is the Source and the Sustainer and the Proprietor of all things, has the right to pity much more. The psalmist says: "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Ps. xciv. 9). And we may say, "He that fashioned the human heart to pity, shall *He* not have compassion?" Certainly pity is more to be looked for in Him, who is not only the Fountain of all pity, but is connected with all

His creatures by stronger and tenderer ties than any other. Jonah had done nothing for the gourd; but the Lord had done much for the great city of Nineveh. In Him all its inhabitants had lived and moved and had their being; and over them all He had exercised a constant providential care; and having done so for Nineveh, He had a greater right to pity it than Jonah had to pity the gourd for which he had done nothing.

Then we have in the second place *the greatness of the object pitied.* While Jonah pitied the gourd, the Lord pitied the great city of Nineveh. The one object is as nothing to the other. One of the cattle of the city, as belonging to a higher order of life, was more to be pitied than the gourd; and then, while there was only *one* gourd, there were *much* cattle in Nineveh—a fact which vastly increases the superiority of its claim to be pitied. But, in addition to the much cattle, the great city contained more than 120,000 children who had not reached the age of responsible action. If we take the irresponsible children to be from three years of age and under, then, according to the usual computation that such form a fifth part of the population, Nineveh would have more than 600,000 inhabitants. And every one of them, as belonging to a much higher order of life, was much more to be pitied than

the gourd. On one occasion Jesus said to the Jews: "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep?" and as the sheep is of more value than the gourd, man must be of very much more value than that plant; and as Nineveh contained more than 600,000 human beings, besides much cattle, the great city must have been immeasurably more deserving of pity than the ephemeral gourd which covered the booth of Jonah.

The argument as addressed to Jonah was unanswerable. He, who claimed to have the right of pitying the gourd for which he had done nothing, must have felt that it would be monstrous to deny that the Lord had the right to pity the great city of Nineveh for which he had done so much. There is, indeed, an element in the argument essential to its validity, which is left unexpressed, viz., the repentance of the Ninevites. Had Nineveh not repented, then, notwithstanding the more than 120,000 children and the much cattle, the great city would not have been spared. The burden of Jonah's preaching was, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Even in that case God would have pitied the city. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways:

for why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). The heart of God towards an impenitent Nineveh would have been like that of Jesus, when He wept over the doom of impenitent Jerusalem. He always pities, and would, if He could, spare the wicked. It is because sinners harden themselves in their iniquity, and will not repent, that the Lord, though He pities, visits them with His destructive judgments. But Nineveh repented, and cried mightily unto God for mercy: and as God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, He, as the sacred historian informs us, "repented of the evil, which He said He would do unto them, and He did it not." And Jonah, to whom the argument was addressed, was convinced that Nineveh had repented, and would in consequence be spared. It was just that conviction which made him so distressed. Hence the argument would tell with unbroken force on the mind and heart of the prophet.

To increase the force of the general argument, the Lord brings two things under the special notice of Jonah. One is, *the large number of innocent children in the city.* It contained more than 120,000 of them. The grown-up inhabitants had no doubt been exceedingiy wicked, and deserved to be destroyed. The unerring Judge of all the earth

had so regarded them, and had sent His prophet to announce their doom; and Jonah, as the servant of the Righteous Judge, might very properly sympathise with the Divine judgment; but surely the innocent children, who had excited the pity of the Most High, ought also to have excited the pity of His servant. As the Lord wished to spare the city for their sake, so should Jonah; but in his blind zeal the prophet had overlooked the claims of this immense multitude of helpless innocents. When reminded of their existence, Jonah could hardly but feel that their presence in the city was a strong reason for not overthrowing it, and involving them in its destruction.

The second thing was *the presence of much cattle in the great city*. There is something beautiful and touching in God's loving remembrance of the dumb creatures. Their interests entered as a factor in determining the course of the Divine action. As the overthrow of the city would involve their destruction, it was natural that the Creator and Preserver should wish to save them by sparing the city. And so by mentioning these two things, the large number of innocent children and the much cattle, the argument addressed to Jonah was more crushing and complete.

There are many passages besides this in the Old

Testament which reveal God's loving care for the irrational animals. He is called their Preserver (Ps. xxxvi. 6); He is said to hear their cry (Ps. cxlvii. 9); He is declared to be their Bountiful Provider (Ps. civ. 27, 28). In the law we meet with such instructions as these: "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayst take unto thyself, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst prolong thy days" (Deut. xxii. 6, 7) and, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth the corn" (Deut. xxv. 4). Kindness to animals was looked upon as a mark of a pious man (Prov. xii. 10). And in the New Testament our Lord teaches very fully God's tender care for even the least of His creatures. He said on one occasion, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God" (Luke xii. 6); and in the Sermon on the Mount, "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them" (Matt. vi. 26).

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all."

There is a passage in one of Paul's epistles, which seems to conflict with such teaching. The apostle wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "Do I speak these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law also the same? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith he it altogether for our sakes? Yea, for our sake it was written, because he that plougheth ought to plough in hope, and he that thresheth, to thresh in hope of partaking" (1 Cor. ix. 8-10).

On this passage Professor George Smith makes this very extraordinary declaration: "In one instance Paul calls the literal meaning of an Old Testament passage impossible, and substitutes for it a metaphorical application of his own, although there can be no doubt that the literal meaning was that of the original author" ("Modern Civilisation and the Preaching of the Old Testament," p. 19). On the same page he says in a note, "Deut. xxv. 4 forbids the muzzling of the ox which treads out the corn. In 1 Cor. ix 9, Paul denies that this can be the intention of the Holy Spirit." There is here no

lack of reckless presumption in boldly accusing the apostle Paul of denying the truth of an undoubted fact and opposing the mind of the Spirit of God; and it is certainly surprising that with such a conviction the Professor, instead of condemning the supposed conduct of the apostle and pointing to him as a warning beacon, should refer to him as a model for the imitation of critics. But in reality Paul is innocent of the charge. He does not touch, nor intend to touch, the historic truth of the law in Deuteronomy. To suppose that Paul in this passage calls the literal meaning of that statute impossible is a gross misapprehension. For Paul to have done any such thing would have been as futile and monstrous as for a man to declare that it was impossible for the sun to shine, while the sun was shining at noon in an unclouded sky. The apostle is referring to the design of God in imposing the statute. The statute in itself certainly shows the Divine care for oxen, and the tender-hearted apostle would have been the first to acknowledge it, but he denies, not the literal meaning of the law as the professor imagines, but that it was love for oxen which led to its imposition. God enjoined the law, not for the sake of the oxen, but for the sake of the people who have to labour. He sought to teach them through this enforced kindness and remuneration to the oxen, that they

ought generously to reward those who laboured for them in temporal or spiritual things. But, although care for the oxen was not the motive which led God to enact the statute in Deuteronomy, the statute in itself is a striking illustration of God's care for the dumb creatures.

The book of Jonah abruptly, though most appropriately, closes with the Divine appeal to the prophet. The abrupt termination of the book, so unusual in ordinary history and suggestive of fragmentariness, has led some to imagine that it is not real history but a parable: but it only shows, what the position of the book amongst the minor prophets implies, that the *mere* historical facts are secondary and subordinate to the unfolding of the Divine mind. The book stops where it does, because God's mind in connection with Jonah's mission to Nineveh had been fully revealed.

Jonah was doubtless silenced by the Divine argument and appeal. He could not but feel that, having claimed the right to pity the gourd, he was bound to acknowledge that the Lord had also the right to pity and spare the great city of Nineveh. He could not gainsay the cogency of the Divine argument. But, while convinced, he was probably not satisfied. He was in all likelihood an illustration of the common adage,

"Convince a man against his will,
He's of the same opinion still."

Though submitting to the Divine will and seeking to say, "Good is the will of the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good," he in all likelihood secretly deplored the sparing of Nineveh all the days of his life. Soon after the Divine appeal Jonah would leave his booth on the east of Nineveh, and return to his own land; and soon after his return he probably, at the instigation and under the guidance of the Spirit, wrote the book for the instruction of the church in all coming time. His future history is wrapt in the deepest obscurity; but possibly, after a brief period of active service amongst his own countrymen, and of inward sorrow over their growing wickedness, he fell asleep and was buried perhaps at Gath-hepher, his native village, where a tomb has been erected to his memory. Though not perfect, he did a noble work, and his name will be held in everlasting remembrance.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

I.

THE BOOK AS HISTORY.

"I know that never blooms in vain
A flower in any woodland lair,
That not a single drop of rain
Is lost upon the desert air.

I know that never is there whirled
Against the shore a grain of sand,
But, in the building of the world,
Serves to complete the perfect plan."

—*Anon.*

THE book of Jonah, which we have considered in the previous chapters, is a narrative of real events, an episode in the life of one of Israel's prophets. It is wholly concerned with the mission of Jonah to Nineveh. It begins with the word of the Lord, who instructed him to go to the great city, and cry against it; and it ends with the word

of the Lord, who showed him the unreasonableness of his grief, because the great city had repented and was spared. The fact that Jonah, the chief human actor in the book, is a well-known prophet, the circumstantial minuteness of the incidents, the simplicity and naturalness of the sentiments expressed, and, so far as the mission to Nineveh is concerned, the rounded completeness of the whole —all go to impress one with the historic truth of the narrative. The book has not only the form, but the spirit of historic truth. There are no doubt wonderful and supernatural acts in the book, such as the raising and the hushing of the storm, the preservation of Jonah for three days in the belly of a great fish, and the marvellous growth and decay of the gourd; but as they are narrated with sobriety as actual events, and served wise and important ends, there is no solid reason for doubting their reality. Those who deny the historic truth of the supernatural in the book of Jonah would require, in order to be consistent, to deny the historic truth of the supernatural in all the other books of Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New.

From the book of Jonah as history we may learn much about two things, the character of Jonah and the character of God.

I. *The character of Jonah.* Had it not been for

this book, we should have known nothing of the character of Jonah, the son of Amittai, of Gath-hepher. The only thing related of him in the history of Israel is the fulfilment of one of his predictions in the reign of Jeroboam II. (2 Kings xiv. 25). He is spoken of as the servant of the God of Israel ; but there is nothing said as to his character. The fact, however, that he uttered one of the most important predictions relating to the welfare of Israel, shows that he occupied a distinguished position in the land. But from his book we may discover several features of his character.

(1.) Jonah was *a man of great faith.* He had great faith in the mercy of God. He could say at the time when he fled into Tarshish : " I know that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil." He had the inward unwavering persuasion that God could forgive such an exceedingly wicked city as Nineveh. It was the fear that his going to Nineveh and crying against it for its sins would open the way for the display of the Divine mercy towards it, which led him to arise and flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord ; and when he did go to Nineveh and saw the inhabitants repenting under his first day's preaching, he believed that the Lord would spare the city.

Such faith in the Divine mercy towards a wicked Gentile city on the part of one of the chosen people is remarkable in Old Testament times. There is nothing superior, if equal to it, in the whole course of Israelitish history.

But Jonah had great faith in the Divine mercy, not only towards the Gentiles, but also *towards himself*. The fugitive prophet on board the ship of Tarshish had been pointed out by the casting of the lot as the guilty cause of the storm, and, when the sailors asked him what was to be done for the hushing of the storm, he had calmly replied : "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea ; so shall the sea be calm unto you ; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." He felt that as the guilty one he deserved to be punished. The sailors, however, in their generosity sought to avert his doom by taking to the oars, and doing their utmost to bring the ship to land ; but, as they toiled in vain, they had at last to carry out the Divine sentence, and cast out Jonah into the angry sea. His case now was one of the darkest and direst extremity. Still, in these apparently hopeless circumstances, Jonah had faith in the Divine mercy. After remembering the Lord, he looked with the eye of faith to the temple at Jerusalem, and cried unto Him for deliverance out of the belly of hell.

This is one of the finest illustrations of faith on record.

(2.) Again, Jonah was *a man of courage.* There are three things in the book which reveal in Jonah courage of a high order. One is, *his flight to the distant land of Tarshish.* To go to Tarshish, which was then looked upon as at the end of the earth, was a journey of the most remarkable kind, especially to a man unacquainted with the sea. It involved a long and perilous voyage. Besides, he would be far removed from home and friends, from the holy temple, and all that he held dear, and be doomed to live amongst the idolatrous heathen. It was an undertaking which none but a brave man could face ; and yet Jonah set out on it with the most resolute determination. Another is, *the way in which he met the penalty of his flight.* When guilt was brought home to him on the deck of the storm-tossed ship, and death stared him in the face, he betrayed no fear, but calmly tells the sailors to take him up and cast him into the sea. No man in the circumstances could have shown greater bravery. And the third is, *his going to Nineveh and crying against its sins.* The difficulties and the perils of the long journey to Nineveh were then doubtless great ; the roads were rough, and the times were lawless ; but it was a

much more formidable task to enter the great city and cry against the sins of its fierce and warlike inhabitants. It was like going into a lions' den, to which Nahum compares the city, and taking liberties with the wild beasts. But, great though the risks and discomforts might be, the prophet seems to have contemplated them without a tremor. The dread, which led him on the first occasion to flee unto Tarshish, was not from danger or discomfort to his person or life, but from the success of his mission in turning the Ninevites from the evil of their ways, and leading them to cry for mercy; and while he felt the same dread on the second occasion, his painful experience in the sea had subdued it and made him willing to do the Divine will. His mission to Nineveh demanded the greatest courage, and Jonah was equal to the demand. He confronted all the risks and hardships without, so far as appears, the slightest hesitation. Perhaps no braver messenger of evil-tidings ever went to a foreign land.

(3.) Again, Jonah was *a man of candour.* He was in an eminent degree frank and free in the expression of his thoughts. When the heathen sailors asked him to give an account of himself, seeing that the lot had pointed him out as the guilty cause of the storm, Jonah made a full and

honest confession. Though they were idolaters and he a prophet of the Lord God of Israel, he told them who he was, and what he had done, without reserve or extenuation. His own account of himself led the sailors in amazement to say, "What is this that thou hast done?" The same candour also marks the expression of his grief to the Lord. After his first day's preaching, when he saw the repentance of the Ninevites, he said with the openness of a child to a father: "I pray Thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I know that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth Thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." The openness and simplicity of the man are even more conspicuous on the second occasion, when he requested for himself that he might die. He was suffering not only from the persuasion that the Lord would spare Nineveh, but through the destruction of the gourd from the sultry east wind and the burning heat of the sun; and when, after making request for death, the Lord said to him, "Doest thou well to be grieved for the gourd?" he said with the naturalness and simplicity of a fractious child, "I

do well to be grieved, even unto death." And if Jonah was, as I believe, the author of the book which goes by his name, the unvarnished narrative, in which his sayings and doings lie before us in their naked truth, is itself a striking proof of the noblest candour. Whatever Jonah might or might not be, he was at all events in a high degree a true man.

(4.) And once more, Jonah was *a man of the most ardent patriotism.* The love of country is in itself a natural and a noble passion ; and of all people the children of Israel were perhaps the most patriotic. Witness the burning words in one of the psalms of the exile, " If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy " (Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6). Their land was endeared to them, not only because it was the gift of God and the seat of their divinely revealed religion, but also because it was the scene of a most wonderful history. And the fire of patriotism burned in the heart of Jonah with a glowing white heat. It was his intense love of country which made him so eager for the overthrow of Nineveh. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh to cry against it for its sins, the land of Israel under the reign of Jeroboam II. was

in great prosperity. This able and warlike king had got the better of Syria, and had extended the boundaries of the kingdom "from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah;" but one great danger to their national prosperity lay in the Assyrian empire, which had already often terrorised the west, and which was noted for its cruel rapacity and ambition. This mighty power, the greatest of the age, Jonah dreaded, and had good reason to dread as events proved, for in little more than forty years afterwards the Assyrians under Shalmanezer destroyed the kingdom of Israel, and carried away its inhabitants into captivity (2 Kings xvii. 3-23).

There is nothing strange or unnatural in the fact that Jonah eagerly longed for the overthrow of this grasping and powerful empire. The people of England, when the liberty of their country was endangered by the Spanish Armada, longed for its destruction, and were delighted when they heard that it had been hopelessly shattered by a storm. Our forefathers in the beginning of last century prayed and longed for the downfall of Napoleon, and were glad when they heard of the fearful destruction which befell his immense army through the winter frosts and snows of Russia. And what we praise in our fellow-countrymen we ought not to condemn in Jonah. There is much in his

patriotism to command our sympathy and admiration. The welfare of his country was dearer to him than life itself.

There are two things, however, which show that his patriotism was sinfully excessive. The one is, *that it led him to disobey an express command of God.* He was plainly told to go to Nineveh and cry against it; but the fear of helping to avert its impending doom induced him to flee for Tarshish. He did wrong to avoid a dreaded evil. And the other is, *that it led to his being exceedingly displeased with the will of God in actually sparing it.* In both cases Jonah placed the welfare of his country above the Divine will. On the other hand, patriotism ought always to be in subordination to the Divine will. The lover of his country ought always to do the Divine will, even though it helps an enemy, and he ought always to be satisfied with the Divine will as expressed in providence, even when it shows favour to an enemy. The will and glory of God, and not the welfare and glory of one's country, ought to be the supreme end of every patriot.

But while we may blame Jonah for his disobedience and murmuring, let us not allow these flaws to blind us to his excellent qualities, but let us give due weight to the fact that he was a man of

faith, a man of courage, a man of candour, and an ardent patriot. The faults of Jonah in the common judgment are almost the only things remembered. The treatment which he has received at the hands of posterity gives countenance to the saying—

> "The evil that men do lives after them,
> The good is oft interred with their bones."

His faults, too, have in general been greatly magnified. Perhaps none of the Old Testament worthies have been so grossly misrepresented and traduced. If we duly consider the threatening aspect of the great and cruel Assyrian power and Jonah's pitiable condition in the leafless booth, his faults will appear to be but specks on an otherwise noble and attractive character.

II. *The character of God.* The book also teaches us several things with regard to the character of God:

(1.) *That He is the Omnipotent Ruler over nature.* He displayed his complete control over the great sea. The storm which arrested the fugitive prophet was raised by God, and when Jonah was cast out into the sea, was hushed by Him into a calm. He acts in the book according to the description of the psalmist: "He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof," and then

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still" (Ps. cvii. 25, 29). He prepared the great fish which swallowed Jonah, and preserved him for three days in its belly from the surrounding waters, and then He caused it to vomit him out on the dry land. The great sea-monster was under His complete control. He prepared the gourd which rushed up in a night, and covered the booth in which Jonah dwelt with its broad green leaves, and thus made for him a grateful shadow from the burning heat of the sun; and He also destroyed the gourd with the same marvellous rapidity as He had produced it. The destructive forces are, equally with the creative, under His control. After giving the prophet one day of exceeding gladness, He prepared during the night a worm, which smote the gourd in the morning, and in the morning a sultry east-wind, which completed the work of destruction. These extraordinary incidents are illustrations of the truth that God is all-powerful and supreme in the realm of nature. Its forces and creatures are but servants which He can use according to the good pleasure of His will.

(2.) *That He is the Hater and Punisher of sin.* The wrath of God is revealed in this book against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. It opens with a commission to Jonah to declare the

Divine wrath against the great city of Nineveh. "Arise," said the Lord to the prophet, "go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me." Nineveh lay beyond the boundaries of the Holy Land, but not beyond the boundaries of the Divine dominion. The Most High takes to do, not only with the people who own Him, but also with all the tribes and nations of the earth. As the Governor amongst the nations, "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good" (Prov. xv. 3); and "He is a righteous Judge, yea, a God that hath indignation every day" (Ps. vii. 11).

Again, when Jonah, instead of going to Nineveh, arose to flee unto Tarshish, the Lord showed His wrath by sending out a great wind into the sea, and threatening to engulf the ship in which the prophet had embarked. This extraordinary storm led to the casting of lots to distinguish the guilty one; and as the lot fell upon Jonah, the sailors called upon him to confess what he had done. This he not only frankly and fully did, but told them to take him up and cast him into the sea as the only way to allay the storm. The sailors, however, touched by his magnanimity, sought to avert his doom by taking to the oars and doing their best to bring the ship to land; but God defeated this

purpose by increasing the violence of the storm, and convinced the sailors that the only way of pacifying the Divine wrath was to cast out Jonah into the sea. And so the sailors, though with reluctance, felt constrained to execute the Divine vengeance.

God's wrath against sin is also seen in the message which Jonah was instructed to proclaim, when he was sent the second time to the great city. On the first occasion he was only to cry against it for its sins; but on the second occasion, as showing that the cup of their iniquity was now fuller than before, he was to cry: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The limit of the Divine forbearance was now nearly reached. In forty days, unless Nineveh itself were changed in the interval, this great city, with its more than 120,000 innocent children and its much cattle, would meet with a fate similar to that of the cities of the plain. Such a threatened doom shows the terriblenesss of the Divine wrath. The thought of it may well lead us to say, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x 31). The book of Jonah tells us very clearly and impressively, in relation both to the prophet and Nineveh, that God is the Hater and the Punisher of sin.

(3.) *That the Lord is a God of abounding mercy.*

There are four things in the book which reveal the richness of Divine mercy. One is, *the saving of the drowning Jonah from death.* In His wrath God constrained the sailors to cast out the disobedient prophet into the sea. "The wages of sin is death," and God would inflict upon Jonah the penalty of his sin; and when Jonah was cast out into the raging sea, far from land and from human help, he was as good as dead. But, when he was in the belly of hell, sinking in the heart of the seas and the waters were pressing in upon him to quench the spark of life, he cried unto the Lord for mercy. The drowning man remembered that the Lord sat upon the mercy-seat between the cherubim in the temple, and he resolutely looked to Him with the eye of faith as he cried for deliverance; and at once the cry was heard and answered in a most marvellous way. A great sea-monster, which the Lord had prepared, swallowed him, and kept him alive in the midst of the sea, and after three days vomited him out upon the dry land. This wonderful deliverance was a striking illustration of mercy. The Lord dealt with Jonah, not according to his sin, but according to the multitude of His tender mercies.

A second is, *His sparing the great city of Nineveh.* God's wrath burned against it for its wickedness. He commanded Jonah the first time to cry against

it, and the second time to proclaim, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." When you think of His compassion for the innocent children and the dumb animals within its walls, the wrath which was bent on destroying them along with the guilty inhabitants must have been terribly great. But when the inhabitants clothed themselves in sackcloth, and turned from their evil ways, and cried mightily unto Him for mercy, God repented of the evil which He said He would do unto them, and He did it not. His great heart of love was moved by the appeal. Though enraged against them for their wickedness, He was induced by their penitent cries to relent.

A third is, *Jonah's persuasion of the Divine mercy.* Jonah hated Nineveh, because it was a standing menace to his own country, and would fain have seen it overthrown; but when God sent him to cry against it for its sins, he had such an inward persuasion of the Divine mercy that, rather than go and give the Ninevites the opportunity of repenting, he arose and fled into Tarshish. This inward persuasion rested upon previous revelations and manifestations of the Divine mercy. And after his first day's preaching in Nineveh he was greatly displeased because he believed that the repentance of the inhabitants would lead the Lord to spare

the city. He said, in his overwhelming grief, "I pray Thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hastened to flee to Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth Thee of the evil."

And the fourth is, *the beautiful and touching appeal which the Lord made to the disconsolate Jonah.* The Lord said to him: "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

These four things show in a very clear and impressive manner that the Lord is rich in mercy and ready to forgive. They give encouragement to all, to backsliding saints and to sinners who do evil with both hands earnestly, to turn unto the Lord and seek His favour. He is ready to hear the cry of the penitent, though the suppliant be on the brink of the grave, or a great sinner of many years' standing. Though wrathful against sin, He is ready to forgive the sinner.

(4.) *That He is a God of consummate wisdom.* There are two things which bring this truth into prominence.

One is, *His fitting Jonah for being an effective preacher to Nineveh.* Had Jonah gone to Nineveh, when the word of the Lord first came to him, he would not have been so impressive a preacher of the righteousness of God as he afterwards became. His preaching then of the Divine wrath against their sins would very probably have failed to lead the Ninevites to repentance. It was no doubt the fear of being successful which impelled Jonah to flee unto Tarshish; but God overruled his sinful flight, for bringing about the very thing which he dreaded. Had Jonah gone to Nineveh at first, as he ought, the thing which he dreaded would in all probability never have happened. By seeking to avoid it, he unwittingly did the very best thing to secure it. First of all, God made the fugitive prophet *a striking illustration of His wrath.* Jonah had imagined that he could escape from the Divine presence by fleeing unto Tarshish; but God showed the utter folly of his imagination by arresting the ship on the sea with a storm, and compelling the sailors to cast him out into the raging waters. By thus suffering for his flight, Jonah became to the Ninevites a very impressive illustration of the aw-

fulness of the Divine wrath. And in the second place, God also made him *a striking illustration of His mercy.* In his dire extremity in the depths of the sea Jonah cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and saved him from drowning, by a sea-monster which swallowed him, and afterwards vomited him out upon the dry land. It was a marvellous manifestation of the Divine mercy. As Jonah in his own experience illustrated both the omnipotence of the Divine wrath and the richness of the Divine mercy, he could not but preach to the Ninevites with much greater power than he would otherwise have done. His own experience would give point and force to his cry: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He was, as our Lord said, a sign to the Ninevites, a person who in his own wonderful history exhibited to them the terror, as well as the tender mercy of the Lord; and by being so he became, in the marvellous providence of God, the means of leading to the repentance and the sparing of the great city. The thought of how God fitted Jonah for his mission to Nineveh may well lead us to say with the psalmist: "Thou art the God that doest wonders" (Ps. lxxvii. 14).

Another thing in the book which reveals His consummate wisdom is, *His teaching Jonah the reason-*

ableness of His action in sparing Nineveh. When Jonah was mourning inconsolably over the deliverance of Nineveh, and praying that his life might be taken away, the Lord said to him, "Doest thou well to be grieved?" The question, while it calls to reflection, gently hints blame. In the circumstances it was admirably adapted to soothe and brighten the grieved and beclouded spirit of the prophet. It helped to take the prophet out of himself, and to make him think that there might be another aspect of the case. And when dark providences fill one with grief and gloom, the question which the Lord addressed to Jonah is perhaps the best, which can be put to such a one, or which such a one can put to himself.

But, while the question did Jonah good, in as much as it silenced murmuring and inspired hope, it did not lead to the right state of mind which God desired. The sparing of Nineveh was afterwards as unpalatable to Jonah as before. But it led him to think that Nineveh might not after all be spared. It suggested the idea that the repentance of the Ninevites, which seemed to be universal and deep, might in reality be superficial and vain in the sight of the Lord; and so with renewed hope he went out of the city, and made a booth for himself on the high lands to the east, that he might see

what would befall it. But, as the days passed by, the sounds which reached him from the city, from the supplicating people and the famishing cattle, made his hope of Nineveh's overthrow to decline, and his fear that it would be spared to increase. His mood had probably become as dark and sorrowful as on the night before he left the city, when the Lord came again to teach the prophet. The first thing which He did was to make a gourd spring up in a night, and cover Jonah with its broad leaves, and shelter him from the burning rays of the sun; and, after allowing him to enjoy it for a single day, the next thing he did was to cause a worm to smite it during the night, and a sultry wind to complete the work of destruction on the following day. The result was that Jonah, with the sun beating on his now unsheltered head, fainted in his booth, and requested the Lord, as before, to take away his life. Having brought the prophet to this state of distress through the destruction of the gourd, the Lord then said to him: "Doest thou well to be grieved for the gourd?" and when Jonah at once emphatically replied that he did, the Lord overwhelmed him in argument with his own confession, and showed in the clearest and most impressive manner the reasonableness of sparing the great city of Nineveh.

His mode of dealing with the discontented prophet may well lead us to exclaim with Elihu, "Who is a Teacher like unto Him?"

The book of Jonah's history is thus most valuable. In giving an account of the mission of Jonah to Nineveh, it not only sets before us the interesting and instructive character of the prophet, but teaches us much with regard to the character and ways of God. There are few pieces of history more interesting and instructive.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

II.

THE BOOK OF JONAH AS TYPICAL OR PROPHETIC.

"We all acknowledge both Thy power and love
To be exact, transcendent, and divine;
Who dost so strongly and so sweetly move,
While all things have their will, yet none but Thine.

Thou art in small things great, not small in any:
Thy even praise can neither rise nor fall.
Thou art in all things one, in each thing many:
For Thou art infinite in one and all."

George Herbert.

THE book of Jonah as history gives, as we have seen, important information both about Jonah and about God, not to mention that which relates to the great city of Nineveh and the heathen sailors. The book has been spoken of as "the history of a prophecy;" but it might with equal truth be described as "the prophecy of a history."

There are several reasons to warrant us in looking upon the history of the book as typical or prophetic. The first which I would mention is—

(1.) *The fact that the book of Jonah in the Hebrew canon is associated with the minor prophets.* If we look on the book of Jonah merely as "the history of a prophecy," the prophetic element in it would be as nothing to the historic. The prophecy in its original form was, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me;" and in its later form, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The two together do not occupy two whole verses, while the rest of the four chapters relating to the prophecy would be historic. As the book of Jonah contains forty-eight verses, the prophetic in it would be to the historic as one to twenty-four; and this fact suggests that the book of Jonah, instead of being placed amongst the minor prophets, should have been incorporated amongst the historic records of the kings of Israel. The framers of the canon should have done with it as has been done with the histories of the prophecies of Elijah and Elisha. The fact, however, that they placed it amongst the minor prophets, seems to show that they regarded the book, not merely as the history of a prophecy, but also as prophetic history. At all events, the

idea is most in harmony with the place which the book occupies in the sacred canon.

(2.) Another fact is, that *God often moulded ancient history so as to make it typical or prophetic of Messianic times.* The following may be given as illustrations: the case of Melchisedek, the offering up of Isaac on Mount Moriah, the misfortunes and elevation of Joseph, the redemption from Egypt by the blood of a lamb, the manna from heaven for the hunger and the water from the smitten rock for the thirst of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the lifting up of the brazen serpent on a pole for the healing of those bitten by fiery flying serpents, the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, the deliverances effected by the judges, and the lowly origin, formidable difficulties, elevation to the throne of Israel, and glorious successes of David. In these and other persons and incidents in scripture history we have divinely-moulded types of the great coming Deliverer ; and as God moulded history in other cases to foreshadow coming events, He may have done so in the case of Jonah. The idea that Jonah was made a type of the Messiah is in perfect keeping with the Divine method of working.

(3.) *The extraordinary incidents in the life of Jonah are best accounted for on the supposition that he was intended to be a type of the Messiah.* The

temporal deliverance of Nineveh from impending judgment does not seem an adequate end for the use of such extraordinary means. The warning of Nineveh in itself differs in no respect from that of other peoples. In all ages God would have all men to be saved. As the end of Jonah's mission was a common one in providence, the use of ordinary means is what one should naturally expect. The use, however, of extraordinary means in fitting Jonah for his mission suggests that God had in view some extraordinary end beyond the repentance and temporal deliverance of Nineveh, such as making Jonah a type or shadow of Him who was to bring repentance and eternal salvation to the world.

(4.) *The fitness of Jonah's wonderful experience to shadow forth the wonderful experience of the Messiah.* If we found a key which fitted the wards of an intricate and curiously constructed lock, we should naturally conclude that the key was made for the lock. Striking adaptation suggests design. And in like manner a striking correspondence between the wonderful experience of Jonah and that of Jesus suggests that God had the latter in view when He was fashioning the former. And once more,

(5.) *Jesus used Jonah as a type of Himself.* He referred to him as a sign or proof of His Messiahship.

He said to the Jews, when they asked him for a sign, "There shall no sign be given to you but the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matt. xii. 39; xvi. 4). Had Jonah's wonderful experience been nothing more than an apt illustration of what was to be His own, as some think, Jesus would not have called him a sign. As a mere illustration Jonah could in no true sense be a sign or proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. He only becomes a sign when his wonderful experience is regarded as typical or prophetic of what was to take place in the Messiah. In that case the one event guaranteed the certainty of the other; and as Jonah's wonderful experience was an extraordinary manifestation of Divine power, it became a sign, not only to the Ninevites, but also from its typical or prophetic character to the Jews in our Lord's day. Two things confirm the truth of this interpretation. The one is, that it agrees with the answer which Jesus gave the Jews during the first passover of His public ministry when they asked for a sign: it was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again;" and the other is, the reply which Jesus gave the Jews, as recorded by Luke, viz., "For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of man be to this generation" (Luke xi. 30).

On these five mutually supporting reasons the

typical character of this book seems to rest as on a solid and immoveable foundation; and this being so, I shall now touch on the main points in the history which are typical or prophetic of Jesus of Nazareth.

I. *His name.* The name of the prophet, who was sent to warn Nineveh, was *Jonah* or *Dove.* It would be rash and unjust to say that there was nothing in Jonah corresponding to the dove. His beautiful ode, and the bitterness of his grief, as well as the exuberance of his joy, show at least that he was a man of the most exquisite sensibility; and his kindly attitude towards the heathen sailors of the ship of Tarshish suggests that he had a warm and noble heart. In spite of appearances to the contrary, I am inclined to think that Jonah was remarkable for the loving gentleness of his disposition. He was probably not unlike the apostle Paul, capable of the glowing fierceness of a persecutor and the gentle tenderness of a nurse. Instead of looking upon Jonah, as some do, as a representative of the strictest sect of the Israelitish people, I am inclined to look upon him as a representative of the broadest and most enlightened men of his age. Probably not one of the Apostles, nor any other Jew during the earthly life of Jesus, placed in Jonah's circumstances, would have shown to greater

advantage. Still, as regards the Ninevites to whom he was sent, it must be owned that Jonah had nothing of the dove but the name. Instead of mourning over them because of their impending destruction, he lamented that they were spared.

But, while Jonah was a dove in name, Jesus was a dove in reality. At His baptism, when about to enter on His public ministry, the Spirit of God descended from the opened heavens like a dove, and rested upon him (Matt. iii. 16). And that dove-like spirit inspired Him in all that He afterwards did and said. He had in all circumstances and places the innocence, the gentleness, and the mourning love of the dove. He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. He was the friend of publicans and sinners, and had compassion on the ignorant and on those that were out of the way. As foretold by Isaiah, He did not break the bruised reed, and He did not quench the smoking flax (Isa. xlii. 3). His own gracious words were, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). In His pity He healed all manner of sickness and diseases amongst the people, and He wept, not only at the grave of Lazarus, but over the doom of Jerusalem which had rejected Him, and was about to imbrue its hands in His blood. And what He was, He is

still. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). He is now to all men what He was to the limited circle of the Jews in the days of His flesh. The type is as nothing to the Anti-type. The shadow is as nothing to the substance. Jesus is a Jonah or Dove in a pre-eminent and an absolutely perfect degree.

II. *His figurative death.* Jonah, to all appearance, perished in the storm. The sailors on board the ship of Tarshish had taken him up, and heaved him into the angry sea, where he sank like lead in the mighty waters, and went down to the roots of the mountains, and there he was swallowed by a sea-monster. Such a man in ordinary circumstances must have perished; but God by His wonderful power preserved him alive in the belly of the great fish. Now this figurative death of Jonah, which foreshadowed the real death of Jesus, bore four striking points of resemblance to it.

(1.) *Both were brought about by sin.* Jonah was cast into the sea for sin; and it was for sin that Jesus died upon the cross. The sin of Jonah, though occasioned by the cruel ambition of the Ninevites, and the narrow-minded views of his own people, was his own; he was personally to blame for refusing to go to Nineveh and seeking to flee

from the presence of the Lord; but the sin for which Jesus died was not His own, for He had none, but the sin of the world. As Paul said to the Christians at Corinth, "God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). The Most High treated Him as a sinner, and inflicted upon Him the penalty of death.

(2.) *Death in both cases was inevitable.* Jonah had to be cast into the sea for the safety of the ship and those on board. The sailors indeed, though they knew that Jonah was the guilty one and that the storm was roaring for its prey, yet sought to save him from a watery grave. They plied the oars with all their might to bring the ship to land, but in vain. The increasing fury of the storm made it impossible for them to succeed; and the only way in which they could save themselves and the ship was to cast out Jonah into the sea. And in like manner the death of Jesus was inevitable if men were to be saved from the wrath of God. Jesus Himself said to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life" (John iii. 14, 15). His sensitive humanity, when He came to meet it, revolted against it. He cried

in the garden of Gethsemane: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). And the result showed that it was not possible. His enemies, when they mocked Him on the cross, uttered a great truth when they said: "He saved others; Himself he cannot save" (Matt. xxvii. 42).

(3.) *Death in both cases was voluntary.* Jonah was willing to die. When the sailors said to him, "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" Jonah replied, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you." And Jesus also was willing to die. When Peter sought to dissuade Him from going up to Jerusalem to die, Jesus said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. xvi. 23). On another occasion He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50). In connection with the parable of the Good Shepherd He said to the Jews: "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have

power to take it again" (John x. 17, 18). And it is noted of His last journey that, instead of hesitating, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 51).

(4.) *Death in both cases was dreadful.* The death of Jonah was dreadful. He had to suffer not only the horrors of drowning but the still greater horror of Divine desertion. The poor drowning man was constrained to say, "I am cast out from before thine eyes." But the death of Jesus was inexpressibly more dreadful. He had not only to suffer the pains of crucifixion, aggravated by the jibes and sneers of the onlooking multitude, but the desertion of His own Divine Father. This latter element of His suffering wrung from Him the loud and bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

In these four points the figurative death of Jonah shadowed forth the real death of Jesus, though in every point the type came far short of the Antitype. The sin for which Jesus died was immeasurably greater, the inevitability of His death immeasurably more real, its voluntariness immeasurably more hearty, and its terror immeasurably more dreadful.

III. *His figurative resurrection.* Though to all appearance Jonah was dead, yet in reality he was

alive in the belly of the great fish; and after continuing for three days "in the belly of Hell" he was vomited out upon the dry land to the full freedom and activity of life. His restoration was a figurative resurrection, a type and adumbration of the real resurrection of Jesus from the dead. There are three points of resemblance between the two.

(1) *Both took place three days after the entombment.* Jesus Himself calls attention to this. He said to the Jews: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 40). As we have already explained, the phrase "three days and three nights" is a common Hebrew expression for three days in whole or in part; and as it was only three days in part in the case of Jesus, viz., part of Friday, all Saturday, and a part of the first day of the week, we may safely conclude that it was also the same in the case of Jonah. It was on the third day after the entombment that both Jonah and Jesus were raised up, the one from the belly of the fish and the other from the sepulchre of Joseph.

(2) *Both were preceded by thanksgiving during the period of entombment.* It was in the belly of the great fish that Jonah offered up the prayer of

thanksgiving which is recorded in the second chapter of the book. He gratefully acknowledges God for his deliverance, and vows that he will sacrifice unto Him with the voice of thanksgiving. Jonah in the belly of the fish looked upon his deliverance as virtually complete. And the thanksgiving of Jonah during the time of his entombment is typical of the thanksgiving of Jesus during the time of His. He went, when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, not to the spirits in prison to preach the gospel, as some interpret the dark passage in Peter's epistle (1 Peter iii. 19), but to Paradise, as He Himself told the penitent thief (Luke xxiii. 43). And as the deliverance of Jesus was immeasurably greater than that of Jonah, the prayer of thanksgiving which He offered up in that land of light would be, we may be sure, far richer and fuller in its tones of gratitude and joy. And again,

(3) *Both were followed with the full freedom and activity of life.* After his restoration Jonah was in the full freedom and vigour of life, as his journey to Nineveh and ministry there clearly show; and the living Jonah was a shadow, though dim, of the living Christ after the resurrection. There are two respects in which the risen life of Jonah came short of the risen life of Jesus. One is that the body of Jonah, though full of vitality, was still natural,

while the body of Jesus had become spiritual and possessed of superior endowments of freedom and activity. Jonah had still the body of our humiliation, while Jesus had the body of our exaltation. And the other is, that Jonah after a few short years died and was buried, while Jesus rose to die no more. In coming forth from the tomb, Jesus escaped for ever from the snares of death, and became the Ever-Living One. He said to John in Patmos: "Fear not, I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. i. 18). The risen Jonah was to the risen Christ as the shadow to the substance.

IV. *His mission to Nineveh.* Nineveh, to which the Hebrew prophet was sent to warn them of "the wrath to come," was the capital of the great Assyrian empire, the greatest in the world in that age; and Jonah's mission to the great Gentile city was typical or prophetic of the mission of Jesus to the Gentiles. There are two points of striking correspondence between the two prophets.

(1) *Both were first prophets to the chosen people.* Hitherto the ministry of Jonah had been confined to the land of Israel. He had lived and laboured for the welfare of his fellow-countrymen. And as it had been with Jonah during the first part of his

life, so it was with Jesus in the days of His flesh. He never went to preach to the Gentiles, but confined His ministry to the Holy Land and the chosen people. In justification of His treatment of the Syro-Phœnician woman, He said to His disciples, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24).

(2.) *Both became prophets to the Gentiles after their death and resurrection.* It was shortly after his figurative death and resurrection that the word of the Lord came again unto Jonah, saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (iii. 2); and, though as much out of sympathy with the object of his mission as he had been when he fled to Tarshish, he at once arose and went. His terrible experience of disobedience constrained him to go. And it was after His resurrection from the dead that the mission of Jesus to the Gentiles began. He said to His disciples before His Ascension: "All power hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20). He

was not like Jonah, out of sympathy with His mission to the Gentiles. Instead of being constrained to enter upon it through His bitter experience of the wrath of God, the Lord of His own accord endured that wrath that He might be fitted for His mission of mercy. Though Jonah went as a prophet to the Gentiles, he was hostile to the gracious aim of his mission; but Jesus, on the other hand, was whole-hearted and sympathetic. The type came far short of the Antitype. And once more,

V. *His success.* The success of Jonah was remarkable. By his one day's preaching he converted and saved from the impending overthrow all the inhabitants of the great city of Nineveh, in which there were more than 120,000 little children. And such wonderful success is typical or prophetic of that which Jesus would achieve. The wonderful success of the Great Coming One was often the theme of Old Testament predictions. "In thee," said God to Abraham in reference to Him, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3). "His name," said the psalmist, "shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed" (Ps. lxxii. 17). "It shall come to pass in the later days," says Isaiah,

"that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is. ii. 2, 3). And Jesus Himself often spoke of His great coming success, as in the parables of the leaven and the mustard seed (Matt. xiii. 31-33), and when he said to the Jews: "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. viii. 11, 12).

And as the wonderful success of Jonah was due to his figurative death and resurrection, so the wonderful success of Jesus would be due to His real death and resurrection. Jesus refers to this, when He said to the Jews: "For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation" (Luke xi. 30). The wonderful power of Jesus in turning men from

sin unto God, and delivering them from the wrath to come, lies in His death and resurrection. He said to His disciples during the Passion week, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John xii. 31, 32). And Paul said to the Christians at Rome: "I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. i. 16); and to the Christians at Corinth: "We preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24).

These five points in the history of Jonah's mission to Nineveh are the chief typical resemblances which it bears to the mission of Jesus to the Gentile world. The striking correspondence between the two reveals the unsearchable riches of the Divine wisdom and power. Not only were the great things of the Messiah known to God from the beginning (Acts xv. 18), but He so moulded Jonah in his mission to Nineveh as to foreshadow them. He gave to the church in the career of the ancient prophet a dim outline of the great Prophet who was afterwards to arise. Seeing then that the book of

Jonah, both as real history and as typical or prophetic, is rich in instruction, it ought to be highly prized and deeply pondered. It is well fitted to exalt our conception of the character of the wonder-working God, and to confirm our faith in Him of whom Jonah was but the type. He who has come to warn us and deliver us from the wrath to come —a doom more awful than that which rested on ancient Nineveh—is not only a Jonah or Dove in reality, but One who has died under the wrath of God for our sins, and who has risen again for our justification. He speaks to us in the most winning tones of the most tender love. While sounding the warning of coming wrath, He also says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He is the Man and the only Man who is "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." His death and resurrection, so eloquent of the wrath and mercy of God, may well lead us to repent and hide ourselves in Him; and in Him we are safe from the wrath to come. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). And in Him He will be to us, not only a shelter from the coming storm, but "as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Is. xxxii. 2).

APPENDIX.

THE PARABOLIC VIEW OF THE BOOK OF JONAH OF PROFESSOR GEORGE SMITH.

> "A critic on the sacred book should be
> Candid and learned, dispassionate and free;
> Free from the wayward bias bigots feel,
> From Fancy's influence, and intemperate zeal."
>
> —*Cowper.*

Professor George Smith says: "The only view of the story of Jonah which does justice to its teaching and explains its place in a book of prophetic discourses, is that which treats it not as real history but as a sermon, in the form of a parable, upon the great evangelical truth, *that God has granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life.* This I have elsewhere sufficiently proved and illustrated" (p. 89, "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament"). In these words there is certainly no lack of confidence in the soundness of his judgment and the conclusiveness of his reasoning.

I.

Before examining the Parabolic theory of Professor George Smith (which he imagines that he has sufficiently proved and illustrated in his work, *The Book of the*

Twelve Prophets), I would, first of all, call attention to *his treatment of the Historic view of the book of Jonah and its supporters.*

(1) The first point on which I would touch is, *the assumption that the book of Jonah lays no claim to historic truth.* He says in his *Commentary on Jonah* in the above-mentioned work: "Suppose we were to find the latter (*i.e.* the real, as compared with the probable, reason for its having a place among the Minor Prophets) by discovering that the book of Jonah, though in narrative form, is not real history at all, *nor pretends to be;* but, from beginning to end, is as much a prophetic sermon as any other of the twelve books, yet cast in the form of parable or allegory?" (p. 494). Again he says, advancing from the ground of mere supposition to that of positive assertion, "Nor does the book . . . claim to be real history" (p. 498).

This statement is simply not true. The book of Jonah relates to a well-known historic person. It begins after the usual manner of recording a Divine communication, "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me;" and then it goes on, after the usual manner of biography, to relate what this real and distinguished person did and said and suffered. The very form of the book, seeing that it is about a real and well-known prophet, necessarily implies that it claims to be historical. If I were to write a letter to the newspapers about a well-known modern prophet or professor, and in it were to ascribe to him, in the ordinary narrative style, a number of discreditable sayings and doings, I should lay myself open to a charge of defamation of character. The judge on the bench, unless he were a Higher Critic, would not for a moment listen to the plea that the letter laid no claim to historic truth. He would hold that, as it bore the historic form in reference to a

well-known citizen, specially and unmistakably pointed out, the letter must be treated as one dealing with facts and not with fictions, and that the author must bear the responsibility of writing it. Possibly the judge, out of consideration for my deluded imagination, might limit the damages or "indemnity" to a farthing, and dismiss me from the bar with an admonition to avoid such letter writing for the time to come, lest a worse fate befall me. And one strong proof that the book of Jonah claims to be real history, is the fact that it was so regarded by the Jewish people, and has been always so regarded by the entire Christian Church until comparatively recent times.

(2) The second point is *a misleading quotation from Kleinert's "Introduction to the Book of Jonah."* After denying that the book of Jonah claims to be real history, Professor George Smith goes on to say: "On the contrary, it offers to us all the marks of parable or allegory." In support of this assertion, he first refers to Jonah's residence for what he calls "the conventional period" of three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish, and then to the absence of precise historical data in the book. He then quotes in an abridged form, without note or comment, the words of Kleinert: "The author neglects a multitude of things, which he would have been obliged to mention had history been his principal aim. He says nothing of the sins of which Nineveh was guilty, nor of the journey of the prophet to Nineveh, nor does he mention the place where he was cast out upon the land, nor the name of the Assyrian king. In any case, if the narrative were intended to be historical, it would be incomplete by the frequent fact that circumstances which are necessary for the connection of events are mentioned later than they happened, and only where attention has to be directed to them as having already happened" (p. 499 of Professor Smith's work).

Kleinert, who holds the *historic* view of the book of Jonah, is thus adroitly represented as supporting the

parabolic view. The Professor has certainly the right to use the admission of an opponent for the strengthening of his position. It is deemed a feat in legitimate warfare to turn an enemy's guns against himself. But it is not fair to represent an opponent to be what he is not; and this is really, though not intentionally, what the Professor's manner of quotation does. It is unfortunate that he did not inform his readers both with regard to the colour of Kleinert's opinion and the object which he had in view in writing the words quoted. It was not for the purpose of establishing the parabolic nature of the book, as the reader is apt to suppose, but of shewing that the history of the book is subordinated to its prophetic character. This is evident from the words which immediately follow. Kleinert says, "Should the observations mostly presented by Goldhorn and Hitzig be urged for the purpose of denying altogether that the book of Jonah relates historical events (the very thing for which Professor Smith quotes the observations) they must be deemed inadequate; but they certainly prove what Hengstenberg has fully done, that the author communicates historical events only so far as the object requires, to furnish an intelligible basis for the representation of a doctrinal object lying outside of the narrative; that the author, if he avails himself of the facts of history for his purpose, has still employed historical data with discrimination, in the light of, and according to the idea, which he intended to represent" (Lange's Commentary on the Minor Prophets, p. 4, Introduction to Jonah).

Instead, therefore, of Kleinert being an advocate of the parabolic view, as Dr Smith's simple and abridged quotation would lead one to suppose, the German exegete declares that such deficiencies in historic narrative *must be deemed inadequate* as an argument against its historic character. The object of the author was not mere history, as in that case we might expect more minute details, but what the history of Jonah foreshadowed. And the

prophetic nature of the history of the book seems to me satisfactorily to account, not only for its lack of details, but also for its place among the Minor Prophets (Com. on Minor Prophets by Keil and Delitzsch, p. 388).

(3) The third point is *the stress laid on the grotesqueness of the incident that Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish.* The Professor says, "In our effort to appreciate this lofty gospel (viz., that God has granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life) we labour under a disadvantage. That is our sense of humour—our *modern* sense of humour. Some of the figures in which our author conveys his truth cannot but appear to us grotesque" ("The Book of the Twelve Prophets," vol. ii. p. 495). Again, at p. 523 he says, "After the very natural story which we have followed, this verse (v. 17 of 1 Chap., 'And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights') obtrudes itself with a shock of unreality and grotesqueness. What an anti-climax! say some; what a clumsy intrusion! So it is if Jonah be taken for an individual." Again, after suggesting that the historic truth of the incident should be thrown overboard and the matter treated as a myth, he says at p. 526, "Such a solution of the problem has one great advantage. It relieves us of the grotesqueness which attaches to the literal conception of the story, and of the necessity of those painful efforts for accounting for a miracle which have distorted the common sense and even the orthodoxy of so many commentators of the book." And then, to emphasise this he adds in a note at the bottom of the same page, "It is very interesting to notice"—it is satisfactory to know that the Professor gets some enjoyment in dealing with so much stupidity—"how many commentators (*e.g.*, Pusey and the English edition of Lange) who take the story in its individual meaning, and therefore as miraculous, immediately try to minimise the miracle by quoting stories of great fishes who have swallowed men,

and even men in armour, whole, and in one case at least have vomited them up alive!"

It will be seen that Professor George Smith lays much stress—too much stress, it seems to me, for a critic—on the grotesqueness of the incident of Jonah's entombment in the belly of a great fish. Humour, it should be remembered, is a dangerous element for critical research or discrimination. It is apt to distort or obscure the vision; and as every man may be said to have a humour of his own—a humour peculiar to his native disposition, inherited prejudices, or acquired tastes—humour, especially when it takes the form of ridicule, is very variable and uncertain in its judgments. As a matter of fact there is almost no truth, secular or sacred, which it has not covered with mockery and contempt.

The Professor speaks of our modern sense of humour being shocked by the Jonah incident, as if there were something about our humour special and unique. He seems to have forgotton that the same incident excited the ridicule of men at an early period. It was treated with derision by the historian Lucian, who flourished in the latter half of the second century, and listened to with incredulity and laughter by some of the hearers of Augustine, who flourished about the beginning of the fifth century. The only real difference between the two senses of humour seems to be that the ancient one belonged to pagans, while the modern one is to be found within the pale of the Christian Church. In a note Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on Jonah observe, "This ridicule first found admission into the Christian Church, when the rise of deism, naturalism, and rationalism caused a denial of the miracles and inspiration of the Scriptures to be exalted into an axiom of free enquiry. From this time forward a multitude of marvellous hypotheses and trivial ideas concerning the book of Jonah have been brought out" (p. 383).

The grotesqueness of Jonah's entombment, it seems to

me, has been grossly exaggerated. The belly of a great fish in the depth of the sea was certainly a strange place for Jonah to be living in for three days; and unquestionably this could not have been done but by a special forth-putting of Divine power. The reality of the incident doubtless implies that it was miraculous. But, apart from its supernatural character, there does not appear to be any more grotesqueness in Jonah living in the belly of a great fish than in his lying in it as a dead and mangled corpse. The main difference between the two objects of contemplation is that, while the one gives pleasure, the other gives pain. Besides, it is difficult to see how the Professor gets rid of all the grotesqueness he finds in the incident by changing the history into a parable. Whatever grotesqueness there may be in the incident as a fact belongs, it seems to me, to the incident as a fiction or myth.

The true rock of offence in the incident of Jonah's entombment is not its grotesqueness, but its miraculous character. This miracle, like Bible miracles in general, is not a useless wonder, like many curious stories in ancient mythology and the "*Arabian Nights*." It served two grand ends, one in the days of Jonah himself and one in the days of our Lord. It was, as our Lord said, *a sign to the Ninevites* (Luke xi. 30). It was a marvellous exhibition of the righteousness of God in punishing His servant for his disobedience, as well as of the Divine mercy and power in preserving him for three days in the belly of a great fish and restoring him to life on the dry land. And this marvellous sign was the means which God employed in bringing the Ninevites to repentance. It thus subserved a most important moral result. And it was also, as our Lord said, *a typical sign of what would take place in His own experience*. It was the sign to which Jesus pointed the men of His time as the grand proof of His Messiahship. The Jewish people clamoured for a sign; they demanded Jesus to give some extraordinary manifestation of Divine power that He was indeed the long promised Messiah.

But, instead of complying, He said to them, "An evil and adulterons generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale (sea monster), so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 39, 40). The genuineness of the 40th verse has been called in question by some, though I think on insufficient grounds; but even though an interpolation it gives the true meaning of the sign of Jonah. As the Jews were seeking for an extraordinary manifestation of Divine power, the sign of Jonah, which Jesus gave them, can only be satisfactorily understood as referring to this extraordinary experience of the prophet. It harmonises with what He said to the Jews during the first passover of His public ministry, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again" (John ii. 19). They desired a sign then, and they desired a sign now; and it is natural to conclude that His answer on both occasions would be substantially the same. But if Jonah's extraordinary experience be, as Professor Smith maintains, a parabolic fiction, it seems clear that Jonah could be neither a sign to the Ninevites nor a sign to the Jews. A fiction may be an extraordinary manifestation of the human imagination, but it certainly is not an extraordinary manifestation of Divine power. Such a fiction may be an illustration, which Professor Smith alleges, and nobody will deny; but it is not, and cannot be, as it ought, a *sign*. And as the miraculous incident of Jonah's entombment serves these two grand ends, it is somewhat foolhardy in the Professor to turn it into ridicule and contempt.

(4) And the last point on which I would touch is, *his disparaging remarks on the holders of the historic view*. After referring to what he deems proofs of the parabolic view, the Professor thus concludes (p. 500), "All these things are symptoms of the parable—so obvious and so natural that we really sin against the intention of the

author, and the purpose of the Spirit which inspired him, when we wilfully interpret the book as real history." Again he says (p. 526), "To treat this as prose (*i.e.* as history and not fiction) is not only to sin against the common sense which God has given us, but against the simple and obvious intention of the author. It is blindness both to reason and Scripture." Again (p. 533), we meet with these very remarkable, if not blasphemous, words: "How long, O Lord, must Thy poetry suffer from those who can only treat it as prose? On whatever side they stand, sceptical or orthodox, they are equally pedants, quenchers of the spiritual, creators of unbelief."

These words, to say the least of them, are eminently rash and unjust. They are strong; but it is the strength of weakness. They are not the outcome of calm and enlightened reason, but of wild and blind enthusiasm.

II.

We now come to consider *the parabolic view of Professor G. Smith itself.* According to him the book of Jonah is not real history, but a fictitious narrative, woven round the well-known prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, of Gath-hepher. The object of this parable or historical novel is to illustrate and enforce "the mission to the Gentiles, God's care for them, and their susceptibility to His word" to "a prejudiced and thrice-reluctant mind" (p. 501). Jonah is the type or symbol or representation "of Israel as a whole in their national reluctance to fulfil their Divine mission to the world" (p. 502). "Like them he flees from the duty God has laid upon him. Like them he is, beyond his own land, cast for a set period into a living death, and like them rescued again only to exhibit once more upon his return an ill-will to believe that God had any fate for the heathen except destruction. According to this theory, then, Jonah's disappearance in the sea and the great fish,

and his subsequent ejection upon dry land, symbolise the exile of Israel and their restoration to Palestine" (p. 503).

Again, with regard to the charge that the story about Jonah and the great fish is a clumsy intrusion, the Professor says: "So it is if Jonah be taken as an individual. But if we keep in mind that he stands here, not for himself but for his nation, the difficulty and the grotesqueness disappear. It is Israel's ill-will to the heathen, Israel's refusal of her mission, Israel's embarkation on the stormy sea of the world's politics, which we have had described as Jonah's. Upon her flight from God's will there followed her exile, and from her exile, which was for a set period, she came back to her own land, a people still, and still God's servant to the heathen. How was the author to express this natural death and resurrection? In conformity with the popular language of his time, he had described Israel's turning from God's will by her embarkation on a stormy sea, always the symbol of the prophets for the tossing heathen world that was ready to engulf her; and now to express her exile and return he sought metaphors in the same rich poetry of the popular imagination" (p. 523).

As to how Jonah should become the hero of a fictitious and symbolic narrative, the Professor says: "Why, of all prophets, Jonah should have been selected as the type of Israel, is a question hard but perhaps not impossible to answer. In history Jonah appears only as concerned with Israel's re-conquest of her lands from the heathen. Did the author of the book say: I will take such a man, one to whom tradition attributes no outlook beyond Israel's own territories, for none could be so typical of Israel, narrow, selfish, and with no love for the world beyond herself? Or did the author know some story about a journey of Jonah to Nineveh, or at least some discourse by Jonah against the great city?" . . . "We must, therefore, admit our ignorance of the reasons

which led our author to choose Jonah as a type of Israel. We can only conjecture that it may have been because Jonah was a prophet whom history identified only with Israel's narrower interests. If, during subsequent centuries, a tradition had risen of Jonah's journey to Nineveh, or of his discourse against her, such a tradition has probability against it" (p. 504-5). The difficulties of the Professor remind one of the saying of the wise man: "The way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. xiii. 15).

Such is a comparatively brief general outline of the parabolic view of the book of Jonah which Professor George Smith so strenuously maintains. I shall give more details in the course of its examination. The indictment which I bring against it, and which I shall endeavour to prove, consists of four separate and independent charges—(1) that it is based on error, (2) built up with falsehood, (3) inconsistent with itself, and (4) incredible.

I. *Based on error.* The idea on which his parabolic view is based is, that the divinely-inspired mission of ancient Israel was to proclaim God's grace to the Gentile world. It is on the ground of its truth that Jonah's mission to Nineveh is taken to be an emblem of Israel's mission to the Gentiles, Jonah's aversion to his mission to be an emblem of Israel's aversion to theirs, and Jonah's punishment for his disobedience, in being cast out into the sea and swallowed by a great fish, to be an emblem of Israel's punishment for their disobedience in the exile, in which they were, as it were, cast out into the sea of the nations and swallowed by a world-power monster, though after a time, like Jonah, they were restored to life on their own land. Now it seems to me that the idea on which the parabolic view is founded, and without which it falls to the ground a total wreck, is a grave error.

It is no doubt true that the Israelitish nation was chosen with a view to the ultimate evangelisation of the

world. This is plain from the terms of the covenant which God made respectively with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the great progenitors of the chosen people. The Lord said to Abraham in Haran: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii. 1-3). He addressed also similar words to Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 4), and to Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 14). But it is noteworthy that this world-wide aspect of their mission is not specially mentioned when God entered into covenant with the chosen people at Mount Sinai. The Lord said to Moses on the Mount: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you upon eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. xix. 3-6). It is also noteworthy that all the commands, which God imposed on them, are confined to their own worship and conduct in their own land. There is no injunction, so far as I know, that they were to send forth messengers to the heathen nations to tell them of God's wonderful love and grace. The reason for this silence seems to be that the time for carrying out God's gracious purpose with regard to all the nations of the earth had not yet come.

There are indeed many references to the world-wide gracious purposes of God both in the psalms and the prophets. The poet seer, who sings in the 72nd Psalm of the Great King whose dominion was to extend from sea to sea, says in the 17th verse: "His name shall

endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun; *and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.*" The singer has evidently in view the promise which God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The same promise was in the mind of Isaiah when he had this glorious vision: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; *and all nations shall flow into it*," &c. (Is. xi. 2-4). It was also in the mind of the psalmist when he breathes the prayer: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations" (Ps. lxvii. 1, 2). But there is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament either penitence for the lack of missionary effort or exhortation to the people to undertake it. The only penitence and exhortation of which we read are confined to personal or national fidelity to God. The Israelitish people in ancient times, during that period of education and preparation, would have fulfilled their mission, if they had kept themselves separate from the surrounding nations, and given them an example of loving trust in and obedience to Jehovah. They egregiously failed, not because they did not seek to enlighten and save the heathen nations, but because they themselves forsook the God of their fathers, and followed after the gods of their idolatrous neighbours. It was for this, and not for neglecting the Gentiles, that God inflicted on them the punishment of the Exile.

In confirmation of this opinion, I would refer to the personal ministry of our Lord. It was confined almost exclusively to the chosen people. He charged His twelve apostles, when He sent them forth to preach the gospel of the kingdom: "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"

(Matt. x. 5, 6). When the Syro-Phœnician woman besought Him to heal her daughter, he answered her not a word, but said in her hearing to his disciples: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24). The fact that it was not *His* mission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, seems to be a very strong proof, that it was not the mission of the ancient Jewish church. The set time for the mission was after the resurrection, when the Lord said to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Matt. xvi. 15).

But if it was not the mission of the ancient Jewish church to teach the Gentile nations, the parabolic view of the book of Jonah is, as I have said, based on error. Jonah's mission to Nineveh was exceptional; and it is foolish and erroneous to use an exception as an illustration of a general rule.

II. *Built up with falsehood.*—This charge against the parabolic view is distinct from the former, and in no wise dependent on it for validity. The fundamental idea might be sound, and yet its superstructure might be a composition of false materials. The parabolic view is built up with falsehood, inasmuch as it transforms the historical facts in the book of Jonah into fiction. The only historical fact which Professor Smith acknowledges is the existence of the prophet Jonah. Beyond this, the whole story is the pure creation of some imaginative writer who lived about 300 B.C. The parable is no doubt a lawful and most effective mode of teaching truth. Our Lord often used it in speaking to the Jewish people of the mysteries of His kingdom. But in turning the book of Jonah into a parable the Professor, it seems to me, has been guilty of falsifying sacred history.

In defence of what he has done the Professor has said much. I have already touched on some of his reasons, such as that the book of Jonah lays no claim to be real history, its lack of precise historical information, and the

grotesqueness of Jonah's entombment in the belly of the great fish. The only thing which I would add in connection with these points is a quotation, in reference to the lack of historical details, from the *Introduction to the Book of Jonah* by Keil and Delitzsch. They observe: "The assertion that completeness in all external circumstances, which would serve to gratify curiosity rather than to help to an understanding of the main facts of the case, is indispensable to the truth of any historical narrative, is one which might expose the whole of the historical writings of antiquity to criticism, but can never shake their truth. There is not a single one of the ancient historians in whose works such completeness as this can be found; and still less do the Biblical historians aim at communicating such things as have no close connection with the main object of their narrative, or with the religious significance of the facts themselves" (Com. on Minor Prophets, vol. i. p. 381). These words seem to make it evident that any lack of historical details which may be found in the book of Jonah is no reason for denying its historic character, and resolving it into parabolic fiction.

Another thing which the Professor brings forward in support of his view, and on which he lays great stress, is *the Biblical use of the sea-monster as a symbol of the world-power.* The outstanding passage, which is from the writings of Jeremiah, is this: "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his maw with my delicates; he hath cast me out." . . . "And I will do judgment upon Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up; and the nations shall not flow together any more to him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and save yourselves every man from the fierce anger of the Lord" (Jer. li. 34, 44, 45). All that

the Professor says about myths in connection with this passage seems altogether out of place, as much so as if one were to write a learned treatise upon, and throw a halo of mystery about, the simple theme that two and two make four. There is no need of mythical or legendary lore to explain the use of the sea-monster as an illustration of a conquering and absorbing king. Such metaphors are common in all languages and ages, and in no language or age more than our own. Jeremiah's comparison or metaphor mankind everywhere would readily understand, and appreciate as natural, beautiful, just, and impressive.

But this passage in no way supports the parabolic view of the book of Jonah. First of all, there is *nothing in the book which asserts, or even hints, that the sea-monster which swallowed Jonah is only used as a striking figure of speech.* The only impression which the narrative is fitted to make on an unbiassed mind is that the sea-monster was real and not metaphorical. Had the Professor suggested that the incident of Jonah being swallowed by the great fish had given rise to Jeremiah's illustration, it seems to me that he would have shown more historical imagination and exegetical skill. Besides, *the sea-monster in the book of Jonah appears as his friend, and not as his enemy.* Had it not been for the great fish, the stormy sea, which, according to the Professor, " is always the symbol of the prophets for the tossing heathen world that was ready to engulf Israel," would have destroyed him.

It is very interesting to notice *what the Professor says in reference to the second objection :* " To this the objection might be offered that in the story of Jonah *the great fish* is not actually represented as the means of the prophet's temporary destruction, like the monster in Jeremiah li., but rather as the vessel of his deliverance. This is true, yet it only means that our author has still further adapted the very plastic material offered him by this much transformed myth. But we do not depend for our proof upon

the comparison of a single passage. Let the student of the book of Jonah read carefully the many passages in the Old Testament, in which the sea or its monsters rage in vain against Jehovah, or are harnessed and led about by Him; or still more, those passages in which His conquest of these monsters is made to figure His conquest of the heathen powers, and the conclusion will appear irresistible that the story of *the great fish* and of Jonah the type of Israel is drawn from the same source" (vol. ii. pp. 525-6).

The Professor is manifestly entangled in the meshes of his own mythical theory. The many Scripture passages referred to, in which the sea and its monsters are used as emblems of the heathen powers, are similar to the above passage in Jeremiah. But these passages, however carefully read, do not lead to the conclusion that the incident about Jonah and the great fish is of the same metaphorical nature. Instead of the conclusion *appearing irresistible*, the passages eem to have no more connection with it than Arthur's Seat has with the ebb and flow of the tide, or Tenterden steeple with Goodwin sands. No number of passages containing a metaphor can determine whether another passage is to be taken literally or metaphorically. Every passage must be considered on its own merits. One might collect a large number of passages in which a storm is used metaphorically for adversity; but no number of such passages would warrant us in concluding that the two storms on the sea of Galilee, in one of which our Lord slept and in the other walked upon the sea, were not real but metaphorical. Such reasoning would make sad havoc with history. And the historic truth of the incident about Jonah and the great fish, so far as the narrative is concerned, is as much vouched for as the historic truth of the two storms on the Galilean lake.

Again, let us look at *how the Professor treats the repentance of Nineveh.* "Our author," says he, "let us

once for all understand, makes no attempt to record an historical conversion of this vast heathen city. For its men he claims only the primary human possibility of repentance; expressing himself, not in this general abstract way, but as Orientals, to whom an illustration is ever a proof, love to have it done—by story or parable" (p. 533). The repentance of Nineveh is thus, according to the Professor, a pure fiction. Instead of that great city actually repenting at the preaching of Jonah, the Professor expresses the opinion that Jonah probably never went to Nineveh at all.

The words of our Lord to the Scribes and Pharisees sound a totally different note. He says, "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the jndgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (Matt. xii. 41). No words, it seems to me, could more clearly and strongly assert the historic truth of the repentance of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah. The resolving of the repentance of the Ninevites into a fiction robs the words of our Lord of all sane meaning. It is hard to see *how an imaginary repentance could condemn a real impenitence.* If all that is meant in the book of Jonah by the Ninevites repenting be merely that they had the capacity of repenting, the same could be said with equal truth of the impenitent Jews; and if so, we may well ask, How could the imaginary repentance of the Ninevites, who never repented, condemn in the just judgment of God the impenitence of the Jews? The condemnation of the impenitent Jews necessarily implies, it seems to me, that the Ninevites really repented. Again, it is hard to see *how our Lord could compare Himself as a preacher to that generation with Jonah as a preacher to the Ninevites, if Jonah never preached at Nineveh and the Ninevites never repented at his preaching.* On the understanding that the book of Jonah is history, the meaning of our Lord's words is simple and pointed. He was

greater than Jonah, and yet his success with the chosen people was much less than that of Jonah with the idolatrous Ninevites. It is this fact which reveals their terrible hardness of heart. But on the understanding that the book of Jonah is fiction the comparison is without point and meaning. And as the parabolic view transforms the facts into fiction, it is built up, as I have said, with falsehoods.

III. *Inconsistent with itself.* My next charge is that the parabolic view is inconsistent with itself. According to the Professor, Jonah is the symbol of the Israelitish nation. "The purpose of the book of Jonah," he says, "is to illustrate God's grace to the heathen in face of His people's refusal to fulfil their mission to them. The author was led to achieve this purpose by a parable, through which the prophet Jonah moves as the symbol of his recusant, exiled, redeemed and still hardened people. It is the drama of Israel's career, as the servant of God, in the most pathetic moment of that career" (p. 514).

There are two points in the symbolic picture to which I would direct attention. The first is, *Jonah in the ship before he was cast out into the sea.* The Professor, after narrating the incidents of the storm, says with a glowing enthusiasm: "How very real it is and how very noble! We see the storm, and then we forget the storm in the joy of that generous contest between heathen and Hebrew. But the glory of the passage is the change in Jonah himself. It has been called his punishment and the conversion of the heathen. Rather it is his own conversion. He meets again, not only God, but the truth from which he fled. He not only meets that truth, but he offers his life for it. The art is consummate" (p. 520). Again, "At first Jonah fled from the truth, at last he laid down his life for it" (p. 522).

As Jonah is the supposed representative of Israel, one may well ask, Is there any resemblance between this self-sacrificing Jonah before being cast out and Israel im-

mediatelv before the exile? Did the Jewish people then not only recognise the truth of God's grace to the Gentiles but manifest their readiness to die for it? To answer these questions in the affirmative one would require to be in total ignorance of the Jewish people at the time. Instead of being ready, like Jonah, to die for the Gentiles, they regarded them with a spirit of the bitterest hatred and revenge. The supposed symbol is totally inconsistent with the facts of history.

The next point in the symbolic picture is, *Jonah after his restoration from the great fish.* Jonah, so far as the parabolic theory is concerned, is perfection before being cast into the sea. He is ready to die for the salvation of the Gentiles. The psalm or prayer in the belly of the great fish is quite in keeping with his conversion. But after the prophet is restored to dry land and goes to Nineveh to fulfil his mission, the old aversion to the object of his mission reappears. Its likelihood of success makes him exceedingly angry, and ready to die through vexation of spirit. His sad experience in the sea, instead of making him a better and a wiser man, left him very much worse. This makes Jonah a second time misrepresent the Jewish people, as they were certainly better after the exile than before it. The Professor in his "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament" says on this very point: "The precious fruit of so much sorrow was not lost when the nation and its ritual were restored. It is the witness of all historians of the post-exilic period, that within the strong nationalism and legalism of the Jews there flourished the most beautiful personal piety; souls feeling, as Jeremiah felt it, their individual relation to God" (p. 203). And yet the picture of Jonah, which misrepresents the Israelitish people before and after the exile, is pronouuced by the enthuiastic Professor to be consummate art. If the parabolic theory be true, the picture of Jonah, instead of being a masterpiece, would be a daub.

IV. *Incredible.*—My next charge against the parabolic view is that it is incredible. The glowing antipathy of the Professor to the historic view of the book of Jonah seems to spring from its supernatural incidents, and especially from the supernatural preservation of the prophet for three days in the belly of the great fish. He would fain make the book, which he extols as a noble work of genius and one of the most important revelations in the Old Testament, more palatable to our sceptical and unbelieving generation: and so, in order to get rid of the supernatural, he resolves the history into parabolic fiction. But his mode of removing difficulties creates other difficulties much more formidable. The fact remains that the Jews not only received this book into their sacred canon, but always regarded it as a narrative of historic facts. And if the book were a parabolic fiction, as the Professor alleges, the difficulty of accounting for the act and belief of the Jews seems absolutely insurmountable.

(1.) Take, first of all, *the discreditable conduct ascribed to Jonah in the book.* He is represented as resolutely fleeing from the presence of the Lord to avoid doing the Divine will, and as being petulantly angry and grieved at the Divine sparing of Nineveh. These unworthy acts, which put the prophet before us in an unfavourable light, have lowered him in the estimation of his own countrymen, and of the world at large. But if they are not true, if they are the mere fictions of a designing imagination some hundreds of years after his death, two questions arise: Could a writer honourably take such a liberty with one of the Lord's prophets? and, How could the whole Jewish people accept the slander as truth? The light-hearted and self-confident way in which the Professor advocates the parabolic theory seems to show that, as regards the writing of the book, he has but slightly considered the guilt of slander, and the dishonour accruing to such a method of Divine revelation. But how could the Jewish

people accept these slanders as true? They were remarkable for venerating the character of their prophets. They abused them indeed during their lifetime; but they respected, and even adored them, after they were dead. We find Jesus saying to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were bent upon putting Him to death, "Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets" (Matt. xxiii. 29, 30). How then could such a people believe these gratuitous lies about one of their distinguished prophets as undoubted truths?

(2.) Again, let us take *the fiction of representing Jonah as being swallowed by a great fish, and then after three days being vomited out alive upon the dry land.* This fiction, according to the Professor, symbolises the Exile. But why did the unknown writer fix upon three days as the period of its duration? The only answer, which the Professor gives, is in these curt words, as if the matter were not worthy of a moment's thought, "We have, first of all, the residence of Jonah for the *conventional* period of three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish" (p. 499). The only other passage in the Old Testament, in which the period of three days is applied to the Exile, is to be found in the prophecy of Hosea. The Israelitish people are represented as saying under their affliction: "Come and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and he will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us: on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him" (Hos. vi. 1, 2). Here the captivity and the restoration are compared to a resurrection on the third day. The imagery is remarkable, and certainly analogous to the experience of Jonah in the great fish. But the assertion of the Professor, that a period of three days was conventional for a brief period, is in reality no

explanation, inasmuch as these two passages, so far as I know, are the only basis on which the assertion rests. The question still presses, How came this period of three days to be so understood? And the only satisfactory answer, it seems to me, is to be found in the historic truth of Jonah's experience in the great fish. The wonderful experience of the prophet, which took place about the twentieth year of the reign of Jeroboam II., would be familiar to Hosea, who prophesied shortly afterwards. Between this memorable incident and the above prediction there was only an interval of little more than twenty years at the most. And the example of God's preserving and restoring grace in the case of Jonah might naturally lead Hosea to express his confident hope of God's preserving and restoring grace in the case of down-trodden Israel under the image of a resurrection from the dead on the third day.

But, in addition to the difficulty of accounting for the choice of the three days in the fiction, there are *the difficulties of belief in connection with the fiction itself.* The idea that their prophet Jonah had set out on a voyage to Tarshish could hardly fail to startle the Jewish people, who were so averse to the sea. It would sound as strange in their ears as would the announcement in the ears of the friends of the Professor, that he had set out on a voyage to the North Pole. And the startling announcement would naturally awaken suspicion and inquiry. Then the disadvantageous light in which Jonah on board the ship of Tarshish is set as compared with the heathen sailors would excite their Jewish prejudices. While the sailors were doing their utmost for the safety of the ship, praying to their gods and casting out the wares, their venerated prophet is represented as unconsciously snoring in the cabin. While the God of heaven smiles upon the sailors and hushes for them the storm into a calm, He frowns upon Jonah, and is only pacified when he is cast out as an accursed thing into the sea. The Professor

indeed has low views of the prophet. He suggests that "none could be so typical of Israel, narrow, selfish, and with no love for the world beyond herself." And yet, apart from the book of Jonah, which, according to the Professor, is a poetic fiction, the only ground for this unfavourable judgment is that the prophet did his duty, according to the Divine will, in proclaiming the recovery of the ancient boundaries of the kingdom. But the very thing which has led the Professor unjustly to depreciate Jonah, would justly raise him in the estimation of his countrymen. Hence such a representation would naturally shock their feelings and lead them to reject it with scorn and indignation. But the most difficult thing of all for them to believe is that their prophet, when cast out into the sea, was swallowed by a great fish, and vomited out alive three days afterwards upon the dry land. I can understand how the Jewish people, if the incidents in the narrative actually occurred, were reluctantly compelled to accept them ; but I cannot understand how they accepted such unpalatable and unlikely incidents as veritable history, if they were nothing more, as the Professor alleges, than the poetic imaginings of some unknown writer about 300 B.C. The heads of the higher critics must surely be differently constructed from those of ordinary people.

(3.) Another thing in the narrative, which increases the difficulty of accepting the parabolic theory, is *the prayer of Jonah in the belly of the great fish.* The prayer, which the narrative states Jonah offered unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, is confessedly a gem of sacred poetry. It breathes a spirit of the most ardent piety, and is clothed in the richest and aptest imagery. It is an ode in perfect keeping with the situation. But, according to the parabolic theory, the psalm is not the offspring of Jonah's experience, but a composition which an unknown writer several hundreds of years afterwards either made or adopted from some other, to suit the

imaginary situation which he himself created. This, as the Americans say, is a very large order. It might be too much to say that it is beyond the range of poetic genius so perfectly to embody the experience of a good man in such an extraordinary situation; but the task is certainly one of very great difficulty, and one which few poets could successfully accomplish.

But suppose this difficulty overcome, how could the imagined author of the book succeed in persuading the Jewish people to believe that it was the prayer of Jonah in the belly of a great fish? Such a feat seems to show that he must have been as great a deceiver as a poet; and yet, such is the connection between the mental and the moral, it seems impossible that such a deceiver could pen a poem so fragrant with the odour of sanctity. Besides, the prayer itself seems at variance with the parabolic theory. Jonah in the belly of the great fish is supposed to be the symbol of Israel in the womb of the captivity; and so Jonah's prayer is to be regarded as the expression of Israel's heart during that dark period of her history. But is there any resemblance between the two? Was Israel in captivity penitent and hopeful like Jonah? Did she joyfully anticipate deliverance and sing, while the darkness still encompassed her, "I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving: I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord"? Instead of this, we read of them weeping by the rivers of Babylon, and hanging up their harps upon the willows (Ps. cxxxvii.); and when the deliverance came it took them by surprise. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, we were like unto them that dream" (Ps. cxxvi.).

(4.) Again, there is *the fiction of the repentance of the great city of Nineveh.* I have already called attention to the stress which the Professor lays on the imaginary character of the repentance. In his opinion it is not a fact but a pure fiction, after the manner of Orientals, to

give vividness to the truth that the Gentile world is capable of repenting—"that, and nothing more." But if Nineveh never repented, and never was spared by God on account of its repentance, in the days of Jonah, it is hard to understand why this unknown writer should have selected Nineveh for his imaginary illustration, when, at the supposed time of his writing the book of Jonah, Nineveh was notoriously one of the most striking illustrations in all history of the Divine vengeance. The prophet Nahum, who flourished some considerable time after the time of Jonah, says of Nineveh: "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine; the prey departeth not." . . . "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face; and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdom thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste! who will bemoan her?" "All thy fortresses shall be like fig trees with the first ripe figs; if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies; the fire hath devoured thy bars." "Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy worthies are at rest; thy wound is grievous; all that hear the bruit of thee clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (Nahum iii. 1, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19). These are a few verses of the prophet's vivid and eloquent description of Nineveh's approaching doom. And in reference to its downfall the Professor himself says, "Now Nineveh fell, and was practically destroyed, in 606 B.C. In all ancient history there was no collapse of an imperial city more sudden or so complete" (p. 496).

If, then, Nineveh was one of the most striking examples of the Divine vengeance, how could a writer 300 years

afterwards select it as one of the most striking illustrations of the Divine mercy, the sight of which filled one of Israel's prophets with bitter and rebellious grief? How could he do this when, according to the theory of the Professor, there was nothing in the actual history corresponding to it? Would any novelist outside of Bedlam ever select a model historical example of judgment to be his model imaginary example of mercy? The idea seems incredible. But there is another thing about this imaginary representation of Nineveh which is very remarkable, viz., *its lack of reference to the awful doom of the Assyrian capital.* There is indeed a passage in the book which means, according to the Professor, that Nineveh when the author wrote had ceased to be. It is, "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey" (iii. 3). I give my reasons elsewhere for thinking that the Professor is wrong. But, granting that the Professor's view of the passage is right, the verse refers only to the exceeding greatness of the city. The idea which is brought into prominence is the same as when God said, "Shall not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right and their left hand; and also much cattle" (Jon. iv. 11). But how could a writer living 300 years after that memorable overthrow refer to Nineveh as a notable illustration of Divine mercy without touching on that dread event? Such a writer could not but know that its terrible doom was familiar to the Jewish people, and must have anticipated, if he had any imagination at all, that his beautiful story of Nineveh as an object of the Divine mercy would bring Nineveh to their minds as an object of the Divine judgment. Why was he altogether silent? The only satisfactory answer to that question seems to be that the book of Jonah was written, not only before the destruction of Nineveh, but also before, not merely the prophecy of Nahum, but the later prophecies of Hosea and Amos. The writer must have composed

the book when a sunny atmosphere surrounded the great city.

But in addition to the difficulties connected with the parabolic representation of Nineveh's repentance, there is *the difficulty of accounting for the belief of the Jewish people in its historic truth.* No one questions the genuineness of the Jewish belief. The book of Jonah was never regarded by them as a parable or imaginary story, but always as a piece of veritable history. But how could this very remarkable fact be brought about? How could the Jewish people come to be persuaded that the imaginary repentance of Nineveh and the Lord's imaginary sparing of the penitent city were facts and not fictions, as real events as their redemption from Egypt and the building of the Temple of Solomon?

The time when this imaginary story was supposed to have been penned was certainly not favourable for its acceptance as history. It was 300 years after Nineveh had gone down to an inglorious grave under the curse of God, and the execrations and rejoicings of the surrounding nations. And there was certainly nothing in the story to fascinate the Jewish mind and incline their hearts to believe it. The story, instead of pandering to their Jewish prejudices, went right in the teeth of them. The dislike of Jonah to the sparing mercy of Jehovah towards Nineveh may be fitly taken as an illustration of their national aversion. When Jesus, about the beginning of His Galilean ministry, preached in the synagogue of Nazareth to His fellow-townsmen, He referred to signal tokens of the Divine mercy to the Gentiles. His words were: "Of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet,

and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian" (Luke iv. 25-27). But, instead of listening with satisfaction and delight, they rose up and hustled Him out of the synagogue, and would fain have hurled Him over the precipice of the hill on which the city was built. The same jealousy of God's mercy to the Gentiles is displayed by the Jews again and again in the early history of the Christian church, as, *e.g.*, the murmuring about the reception of Cornelius and his company, and the furious opposition which the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia made to Paul because he preached the gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles (Acts xi. 2; xiii. 44-50). How then could the Jewish people, who were so jealous of God's mercy to the Gentiles, accept this imaginary story about the hated Nineveh as a true tale? The idea seems incredible. The only satisfactory explanation of the Jewish belief is that the book of Jonah is not a parable, but a narrative of facts which could not, however unpalatable, be denied.

I have thus sought to prove the four charges of the very serious indictment against the Professor's parabolic view of the book of Jonah—(1) that it is founded on error, (2) built up with falsehood, (3) inconsistent with itself, and (4) incredible. It is for the jury of the Christian people, who may read or hear what I have said, to judge whether or not I have made out my case. And I confidently leave the judgment in their hands.

THE AUTHORSHIP AND DATE OF THE BOOK.

> "The works of man inherit, as is just,
> Their author's frailty, and return to dust;
> But truth Divine for ever stands secure.
> Its head as guarded as its base is sure;
> Fixed in the rolling flood of endless years
> The pillar of the eternal plan appears,
> The raving storm and dashing wave defies,
> Built by that Architect who built the skies."
>
> —*Cowper.*

The authorship and date of the book of Jonah are subordinate in importance to its historic truth. In unfolding the life of the prophet in the previous chapters, and in the criticism of the parabolic view of Professor George Smith, we have sought to establish the historic character of the book; and if one acknowledge this, the question of its authorship and date becomes more a matter of curiosity than of vital interest. As, however, many critics maintain that the book of Jonah was written long after the day of Jonah, and as this opinion is used to give a colour of probability to the idea that the book contains legendary material, the question of authorship and date becomes one of considerable importance in the interests of Bible truth. My reasons for believing that Jonah himself wrote the book shortly after his mission to Nineveh are the following.

(1.) *Its place in the Hebrew canon.* The book of Jonah, as every one sees and acknowledges, has been placed amongst the Minor prophets. This fact is regarded by some eminent critics as conclusive of Jonah being the author. After referring to the resemblance of the book of Jonah to the narrative concerning Elijah and Elisha in the books of the Kings, Keil and Delitzsch in the *Introduction* to their *Commentary on Jonah* observe: "If, then, notwithstanding this, the compilers of the

canon have placed the book among the Minor prophets, this can only have been done because they were firmly convinced that the prophet Jonah was the author." The same opinion is expressed with equal emphasis by Pusey in the *Introduction* to his Commentary on the book. He says: "The history of his mission, Jonah doubtless himself made. On this principle alone was his book placed among the prophets. For no books were admitted among the prophets but those which the arranger of the canon believed or knew to have been written by persons called to the prophetic office."

Possibly the opinion of these eminent critics is correct; but as it is only an opinion, and one which many do not admit, I am not disposed to accept it as conclusive of the authorship of Jonah. Nothing would be gained by adopting such a course. But while the place of the book among the Minor prophets may not necessarily involve the authorship of Jonah, it seems to me indisputable that his authorship affords the simplest and most satisfactory explanation of the book's position in the canon. The fact of its position amongst the Minor prophets requires to be accounted for, and its more probable explanation, to say the least, is that Jonah himself wrote the book. As he was a distinguished prophet, his authorship would at once command the approval of those who arranged the sacred books.

(2.) *The belief of the Jews.* It has been the uniform tradition of the Jews that Jonah was the author of the book which goes by his name. This fact in itself may not be conclusive, as the Jews, it is alleged, were not critical with regard to the matter of authorship—the same objection has been urged against the truth of the traditionary authorship of Shakespeare—but at all events the fact is presumptive evidence in favour of its truth, and corroborates the opinion that it was the same belief which led the arranger of the books of the canon to place it amongst the Minor prophets.

(3.) *The minute and circumstantial character of the narrative.* Much of the information contained in the book must have come from Jonah himself. He alone knew that the word of the Lord came to him once and again regarding Nineveh, and what the word of the Lord was. He alone knew why he fled unto Tarshish, that after being cast into the sea he was swallowed by a great fish, and in three days afterwards was vomited out upon the dry land, and the incidents which took place while he was in the booth to the east of Nineveh. The occurrences on board the ship of Tarshish were known only to Jonah and the sailors. It is quite possible that some one may have acquired either directly or indirectly all the needful information and then composed the book; but it does not seem at all likely. The minute, graphic, and circumstantial character of the narrative is suggestive of an eye-witness, or one who had a personal experience of the facts. From the character of the narrative we should conclude that Jonah himself was by far the most likely author of the book.

(4.) *That the book contains a real hymn of Jonah.* There are two things which lead me to speak of the prayer, recorded in the second chapter, as *a real hymn of Jonah*. One is, that the book itself asserts it. "Then Jonah," we read, "prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. And he said," then giving the hymn. And the other is, that *it bears the inimitable stamp of truth.* The hymn is in perfect accord with his painful and wonderful experience. There are very few indeed who doubt that the hymn is a genuine production of the prophet. Now the fact that the book contains a real hymn of Jonah, though by no means a conclusive proof that he wrote the whole, is at least, in the absence of anything to the contrary, favourable to such an opinion, and tends to strengthen the force of the three previous reasons.

(5.) *Its silences and sayings regarding Nineveh.* There is no hint in the book of *the final doom of the Assyrian*

capital. It seems incredible that this would have been the case if, as the higher critics maintain, the book was written after 606 B.C., when the great city was completely destroyed. Professor George Smith is of the opinion that it was composed by an unknown author about 300 B.C., three hundred years after the city had become a ruin. It seems certain that if the book had been written after the destruction of the great city, there would have been some reference in it to the dread catastrophe.

There is no hint in the book that *Nineveh would overthrow the kingdom of Israel.* Prophecies to that effect were delivered by Hosea and Amos (Hosea ix. 17; x. 6 Amos vi. 14), probably in the closing years of the reign of Jeroboam II. Jonah as a citizen might dread that this would be the result if Nineveh were spared; but the fact that the prophet was inspired to preach, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," seems to show that no prophecies relating to Israel's conquest by Assyria had as yet been made, as in that case there would have been a glaring contradiction between them and the prophecy of Jonah. And if the book had been written after such prophecies as those of Hosea and Amos, the likelihood is that some notice of the fact would have been taken in the narration. The silence of the book leads me to conclude that it was written before Hosea and Amos prophesied the downfall of Israel, and must therefore have been composed shortly after the return of Jonah from Nineveh.

The sayings about Nineveh in the book point to the same conclusion as the silences. Nineveh in the opening of the book is under the dark cloud of the Divine wrath. It begins by saying, "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." As some delay was caused by the flight of Jonah, the dark cloud of the Divine vengeance over Nineveh had become more lurid and threatening

when the prophet reached the great city. Now the word of the Lord was, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." But as Nineveh repented and besought the mercy of the Lord, the dark cloud of the Divine wrath was blotted out, and the sun of the Divine favour shone down upon the city. The book closes with an unfolding of the fact. Its last words are those of the Lord to the disconsolate prophet. He said to Jonah, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle" (iv. 10, 11).

The mission of Jonah to Nineveh was manifestly the grand theme of the book, while the life of Jonah is only pourtrayed in its relation to his mission. There is nothing about his life either before or after his mission. From the Divine standpoint the book is indeed rounded and complete, inasmuch as it fully discloses the mind of God in regard to Nineveh; but from the human standpoint it is fragmentary and imperfect, inasmuch as it ends without telling us anything either of the impression made upon Jonah by the Divine communication, or of what the prophet afterwards did. No author left to himself would, it seems to me, have brought the book to such an abrupt termination. The only satisfactory explanation of the fact apparently is, that soon after the last Divine communication the prophet was inwardly moved by the Spirit of God to write an account of his mission. His writing the book immediately after would naturally account for the abruptness with which it closes.

On the ground of these five reasons I conclude that Jonah himself wrote the book immediately after his mission to Nineveh, about the year 764 B.C.

Objections.—We come now to consider the chief ob-

jections which are brought against the authorship of Jonah. (1.) *The fact that the book is written in the third person.* As Jonah is spoken of throughout the book in the third person, it is concluded that some one else must have been the author. The conclusion, however, by no means follows, as authors sometimes write of themselves in the third person. The well-known writers Thucydides, Xenophon, Julius Cæsar, and Josephus, are notable illustrations; and what is sometimes done by secular writers is also sometimes done by the sacred writers. The Old Testament prophets sometimes speak of themselves in the third person, as, *e.g.*, Amos (vii. 10-14); Isaiah (vii. 3; xx. 2, 3; xxxvii 2, 5, 6, 21; xxxviii. 1, 4, 21); Jeremiah (xx. 1, 3; xxvi. 7, 8, 12, 24; xxviii. 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, and in other places); Haggai (i. 1, 3, 12, 13; ii. 1, 10, 13, 14, 20); and Daniel (i. 6-end, and in other places). John in his Gospel, when he refers to himself, always speaks of himself in the third person, and generally as "the disciple whom Jesus loved;" and Paul, when he touches on his wonderful visions and revelations, refrains from the use of the first person, and says, "I knew a man in Christ, how that fourteen years ago he was caught up in to Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." It was humility which led John and Paul to speak of themselves in the third person; and as Jonah had a wonderful experience of the grace and power of God, it was probably humility which led him to abstain from the use of the first person, and speak of himself throughout in the third. The adoption of this style of narration is favourable to brevity and judicial calmness.

(2.) *The statement about Nineveh in the third verse of the third chapter.* "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days journey." The *was* here is understood to mean that Nineveh had ceased to be. In opposing the authorship of Jonah, Professor George Smith says: "On the contrary, one verse implies that when it was

written Nineveh had ceased to be a great city" (Book of the Twelve Prophets, vol. ii. 496); and Dean Farrar, "Nineveh (iii. 3) is alluded to as no longer existent" ("The Minor Prophets," 231), This is an entire misunderstanding of the author's meaning. He merely means to say that Nineveh at the time when Jonah reached and entered it was an exceeding great city, without implying or suggesting that it was otherwise at the time when he was writing. Such a use of the past tense is common; and one thing which shows that it is so used here is the fact, not only that there is not the slightest hint of the downfall of Nineveh in the text of the book, but that the book closes with the light of the Divine favour resting upon the great city.

When we considered this verse in our ninth chapter, we brought forward two apt illustrations of this use of the past tense from the Gospel of John: to them we shall now add one or two more. In the account of the daring attack of Jonathan on the Philistines at Michmash we read: "And between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there *was* a rocky crag on the one side, and a rocky crag on the other side; and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh" (1 Sam. xiv. 4). The *was*, which is put before the rocky crag on the one side and the rocky crag on the other side of the pass, simply means that they were there when Jonathan made his attack, without in the slightest degree suggesting or implying that they had ceased to be. As a matter of fact they are both to be seen at the present day, as Colonel Conder informs us. One of the exploits of David's three mighty men is thus narrated: "And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that *was* by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David" (2 Sam. xxiii. 16). The *was* simply means that the well was there at the time, without suggesting or implying that it was not there when the author

wrote. The *was* in these cases was no doubt supplied by the translators to complete the sense; but as such a use of the past tense was natural and becoming in the Greek and English languages, it is reasonable to conclude that it was natural and becoming in the Hebrew language. If not, why not?

(3.) *Alleged quotations from writings later than the time of Jonah.* There are certainly many expressions in the book of Jonah which bear a striking resemblance to, and in one or two cases are exactly the same as, others in the sacred writings elsewhere. A valid objection to the authorship of Jonah from these resemblances implies two things—(1) that the other writings are later than the time of Jonah, and (2) that the author of the book of Jonah quoted from these writings. I do not think it necessary in the interests of the authorship of Jonah to discuss the diverse conclusions as to the lateness of the other writings, because I hold that, even if later than the time of Jonah, the probabilities are strongly in favour of the opinion that the author of these writings quoted from the book of Jonah, and not the author of the book of Jonah from them.

There are three cases of resemblance in the narrative of the book of Jonah to other passages in the sacred writings. (*a*) One is the resemblance *between the raising and the hushing of the storm in the first chapter of the book, and the raising and hushing of a storm in the* 107*th Psalm.* In both it is God that raises and stills the storm; in both there are great terror at the storm and great gladness when it is hushed; and in both the calm is in answer to prayer. But as the description of the psalm is general, and as general descriptions are based on particular cases, the strong likelihood is that the striking resemblance is due to the author of the psalm having the case of Jonah before him when he wrote. And one thing which supports the opinion is, that both authors use the same Hebrew word for *to be quiet.*

(*b*) Another is the resemblance *between the saying of*

Jonah in explanation of his flight and a saying of Joel. This is the saying of Jonah: "For I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil" (iv. 2). And if we compare it with the saying of Joel (ii. 13) we find the two substantially the same. But if either quoted from the other, Joel was much more likely to be the borrower, (1) because a younger man is much more likely to quote from a distinguished senior than a distinguished senior from a younger man; and (2) because the form of Jonah's saying, "I knew," is more suggestive of experience than quotation.

(*c*) And another is the resemblance *between the question of the penitent Ninevites as to the pardoning mercy of God and the question of Joel as to His returning mercy.* The Ninevites say, "Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (iii. 9), and Joel, "Who knoweth whether He will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him, even a meal offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?" (Joel ii. 14). If our conclusion in the preceding case is correct, there seems to be no room for doubting that the question of Joel was fashioned after the question of the Ninevites.

There are also many striking resemblances to other passages of Scripture in *the prayer of Jonah.* Of several of them we may say with Professor George Smith that they "are too general for us to say that one prayer has borrowed from another." They may have come from a common source, the language in use amongst the pious. We shall, however, briefly touch upon those which Professor George Smith declares to be "unmistakable repetions of the psalms."

(*a*) First of all, there is a striking resemblance *between the opening sentence of Jonah's prayer and the 6th verse of the 18th Psalm.* Jonah says: "I called by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he answered me; out

of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice" (ii. 2); and the psalmist says: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry before Him came unto His ears." The resemblance between the two is seen to be striking when we bear in mind that the affliction of the psalmist was similar to that of Jonah. He too was, as it were, "in the belly of hell." He says in the verse immediately preceding: "The cords of Sheol (hell or death) were round about me; the snares of death came upon me" (Ps. xviii. 5). As this psalm, according to the title, as well as from internal evidence, was composed by David, it is extremely probable that this portion of it was in the mind of Jonah when he composed his; but in that case there is nothing opposed to the authorship of Jonah. If it could be proved, on the other hand, that the psalm belonged to post-exilic times, I should say with equal conviction that it was extremely probable that the psalmist had before his mind the prayer of Jonah in the composition of his ode.

(*b*) There is another striking resemblance *between the 3rd verse of Jonah's prayer and the 7th verse of the 42nd Psalm.* Jonah says, "For Thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me: *all Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me*;" and the psalmist, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: *all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.*" The date of the psalm is disputed. One would assign it to the age of David, another to the age of Jehoshaphat, another to the age of Athaliah, and another to the period of the Exile. Some would thus place its date before the time of Jonah, and others after it. The authorship of Jonah, it seems to me, is not seriously affected by either view. If the psalmist existed before the time of Jonah, the prophet of Gath-hepher might very naturally have this portion of it in his mind when he composed his hymn, especially as the psalmist,

like Jonah, bewailed his being an outcast from the Divine presence; and on the other hand, if the psalm did not exist till after the time of Jonah, the only reasonable conclusion from the fact would be, that Jonah was a more original poet than he was thought to be. The undoubtedly original expressions in the hymn show that its author was equal to the task of penning unaided the third verse, as capable of writing it as the author of the 42nd Psalm was of writing the 7th verse of his. Besides, the fact that Jonah was literally, while the psalmist was only figuratively, in the condition described, is certainly more favourable to the opinion that Jonah was the first to write, "All Thy waves and Thy billows passed over me." There is absolutely nothing in the striking resemblance between the prayer and the psalm, whatever may be the date of the psalm, for doubting what the book plainly tells us, that Jonah was the author of the prayer.

(*c.*) Another striking resemblance is *between the 4th verse of Jonah's prayer and the 22nd verse of the 31st Psalm.* Jonah writes, "And I said, *I am cast out from before Thine eyes*; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple;" and the psalmist, "As for me, I said in my haste, *I am cut off from before Thine eyes*: nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee." This psalm, according to the title, was composed by David; and Perowne in his Commentary on the Psalms says: "There is no reason why the psalm should not be David's. It breathes throughout his rare tenderness of spirit, as well as his faith and courage." If the psalm were David's, it is reasonable to suppose that Jonah would be familiar with it, and that its twenty-second verse was in his memory when he uttered the words of the fourth verse of his prayer; but instead of quoting the words verbatim and saying, "I am cut off from before Thine eyes," he moulds the expression of the psalmist into harmony with the circumstances of his condition and says, "I am cast forth," as he had just been from the ship

into the sea. And if the psalm were written by Jeremiah or a later poet, it is equally reasonable to suppose that the author of the psalm was influenced in its composition by the prayer of Jonah. But at the same time it seems to me quite possible that either author might have been ignorant of the other's composition.

(*d.*) Another striking resemblance is *between verse 8th of Jonah's prayer and the 6th verse of the 31st Psalm.* Jonah says, "They that regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy," and the psalmist, "I hate them that regard lying vanities; but I trust in the Lord." As the psalm in this case is the same as in the preceding, the remarks made in reference to that case may be made in reference to this. There is nothing in the resemblance to show which of the two wrote before the other. So far as the resemblance goes, the author of the psalm might have been influenced by the author of the prayer, or the author of the prayer by the author of the psalm; and, as I said in the former case, it is quite conceivable that either author might write without the knowledge of the other's composition.

(*e.*) And the last striking resemblance is *between the 9th verse of Jonah's prayer and the 14th verse of the 50th Psalm.* Jonah's words are, "But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have received;" and the words of the psalmist, "Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High." The date of the psalm is uncertain. Perowne says of it, "This psalm furnishes us with no evidence as to the time of its composition, but in elegance and sublimity of language, in force and dignity, it is worthy of the best days of Hebrew poetry." The psalm, so far as appears, might have been written after the time of Jonah, though more probably before it; and if before it, the likelihood is that we have a reminiscence of the psalm in the ninth verse of Jonah's prayer; but if after it, the likelihood is that we have in the

thirteenth verse of the psalm a reminiscence of Jonah's prayer. There is nothing in the words themselves to determine the question of priority.

There are, as we have seen, many sayings in the book of Jonah which bear a striking resemblance to others in Joel and the Psalms; but none of them afford the slightest evidence that Jonah could not have written them himself. The objectors seem to have forgotten that quotation is something which two can play at, and that the two authors might quote from an earlier unknown writing, or use what was the current literary coin of the realm.

(4.) *Words and phrases supposed to belong to a later period of the language.* To determine the date of a writing from its language is a delicate and uncertain process, and ought to be carried on with the utmost caution. So far as I can judge, the evidence on this head from the book of Jonah against the authorship of the prophet is without weight. The advocates for a later date point, *e.g.*, to *the use of the Aramaic word* "*taam*" (Jon. iii. 7). This word is applied to the decree which was issued by the Assyrian king and his nobles; and as the same word is used for a decree in the books of Ezra and Daniel, which belong to the post-exilic age (Ezra iv. 19; Dan. iii. 10), the inference is drawn that the book of Jonah is likely to belong to the same period. But as this was in all probability the very word used at Nineveh for the decree, its use in the book of Jonah, instead of being hostile to the authorship of the prophet, seems to be a very strong argument in its favour. As Jonah would be familiar with the word during his stay at the great city, he would naturally use it in reference to the decree.

Another thing which they allege against the authorship of Jonah is, that *God is spoken of in the book as* "*the God of heaven*" (Jon. i. 9). They point to the fact that the phrase is used in the post-exilic writings of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the 136th Psalm; and they think that its use in the book of Jonah is a proof that it was composed

in post-exilic times. But the same phrase was used by Abraham and Jehoshaphat (Gen. xxiv. 3, 7; 2 Chron. xx. 6); and as Jonah was on his way to a Gentile land and conversing with heathen sailors, it was natural that he should also use the same designation. The matter is more fully dealt with in the fifth chapter, to which I would refer the reader.

Again, stress is laid on *linguistic differences in the book of Jonah from the book of Hosea, which belongs to about the age of Jonah, and their resemblance to what occurs in the post-exilic writings*. The author of the article "Jonah" in Dr Hastings' Dictionary, after pointing out the linguistic differences and resemblances, thus concludes: "Taking all this into account, it is an unnatural supposition that the author of the book of Jonah should have exhibited all the above-mentioned linguistic features to a reader of the eighth century B.C. He must have belonged to a period when the *written* language of the Israelites had already come into close contact with the Aramaic." There are two things, it seems to me, which may easily account for them all. (1.) That Jonah was born and brought up in the outlandish village of Gath-hepher; and especially (2.) the fact that he lived for some time in Assyria. The prophet Jonah was in circumstances similar to those of the post-exilic writers, and therefore as a writer he would naturally be expected to differ from Hosea, and to resemble those who had an experience similar to his own. The linguistic features, which are supposed to be fatal to the authorship of Jonah, seem rather to confirm it.

On these grounds I believe that Jonah is the author of the book, and that he wrote it shortly after his mission to Nineveh, about 764 B.C.

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Professor Laidlaw in Expository Times, Dec. 1903.

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